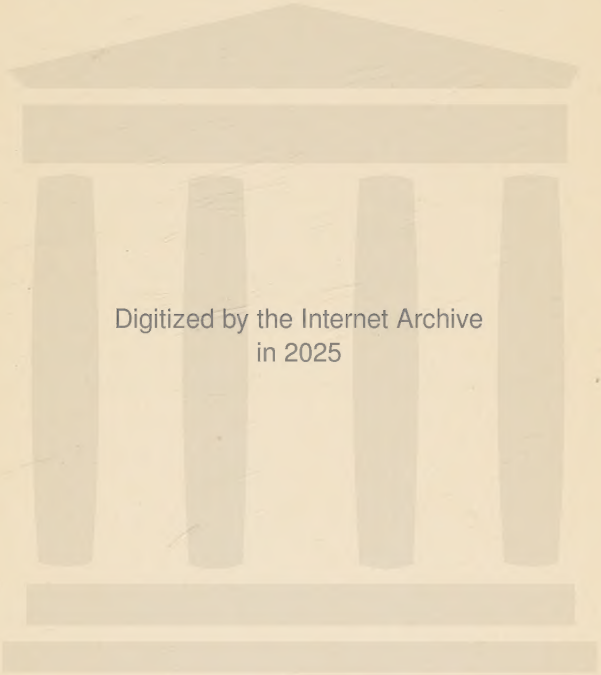
THE LITERARY PRIMACY OF THE BIBLE

GEORGE P. ECKMAN

Bonebrake Seminary



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GEORGE P. ECKMAN

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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER
WHO TAUGHT ME TO VENERATE THE SCRIPTURES
AND ENCOURAGED ME TO
"PREACH THE WORD"

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FOREWORD

THE late Reverend Marmaduke H. Mendenhall, D.D., of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, donated to DePauw University the sum of ten thousand dollars, the purpose and conditions of which gift are set forth in his bequest as follows:

The object of this gift is "to found a perpetual lectureship on the evidences of the Divine Origin of Christianity, to be known as the Mendenhall Foundation. The income from this fund shall be used for the support of an Annual Lectureship, the design of which shall be the exhibition of the proofs, from all sources, of the Divine Origin, Inspiration, and Authority of the Holy Scriptures. The course of lectures shall be delivered annually before the University and the public without any charge for admission.

"The lecturers shall be chosen by an electing body consisting of the President of the University, the five senior members of the Faculty of the College of Liberal Arts, and the President of the Board of Trustees, subject to the approval of the Board of Bishops

of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The lecturers must be persons of high and wide repute, of broad and varied scholarship, who firmly adhere to the evangelical system of Christian faith. The selection of lecturers may be made from the world of Christian scholarship without regard to denominational divisions. Each course of lectures is to be published in book form by an eminent publishing house and sold at cost to the Faculty and students of the University."

GEORGE R. GROSE,
President of DePauw University.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

WITHIN the limits of a half dozen addresses it was impossible to treat with any fullness the theme of these lectures. They were merely intended to be suggestive of the vast and fruitful field which lies open to every student of literature.

The citations from the Scriptures which are used as examples are chiefly from the American Standard Version.

The discussion on "The Humor of the Bible" is largely a reprint of an article from the pen of the lecturer which appeared several years ago in the Methodist Review, and is used by permission of the publishers.

CHAPTER I

The Literary Primacy of the Bible

"Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." Nevertheless, the purpose of these lectures must be frankly avowed. At the risk of committing a strategic blunder, it must be confessed at the outset that their intention is to lure those who receive them into reading the Bible in precisely the same way they would peruse any other literature which they desired to understand and enjoy.

This is something which the present generation of Americans is not extensively doing. The Bible is still assigned the supreme place in the literature of the world by those who are most competent to judge. When men of letters are asked to name the books which have powerfully affected their intellectual development they almost invariably mention the Bible. The larger number of our colleges and universities insist on placing it among the indispensable text-books of their curricula. Its general and particular excellences as literature, its historical significance, its influence upon civilization, the reproductive energy it

has displayed in the literatures of many lands, its supremacy in the realm of ethics and religion, make it requisite to any sound scheme of culture. The conviction of Dr. Eliphalet Nott has never been discredited—"Men cannot be well educated without the Bible." Perhaps there was never a period in modern times when the Scriptures were so intensively studied by numerous small groups of learners, or when in our own country there existed so great a quantity of classes or companies organized specifically for the examination of biblical teaching as the present. Yet something has happened to the Bible in the last few decades which has retired it from that position as a book for popular reading which it formerly held, and which it is sure to occupy again when a clearer apprehension of its worth reaches the masses of mankind. Although the Bible is the "best seller" in the book market, it is probably the least read of any book in the world in proportion to the number of copies produced and owned. What Spurgeon said of England may be as appropriately uttered with respect to America: "The Bible is in every house, but in many the dust on it is so thick that you might write on it: *Damnation.*" Among the contemptuous designations applied to the Oxford Methodists constituting the Holy Club was that of "Bible Moths."

Comparatively few persons in any sect deserve such an epithet now.

The elder Disraeli, in his Curiosities of Literature, referring to the hostility of the Roman Catholic authorities toward granting the laity freedom to scan the Scriptures, speaks of a Spanish author as affirming that "if a person should come to his bishop to ask for leave to read the Bible, with the best intention, the bishop should answer him from Matt. 20. 22, 'You know not what you ask.'" In our day, on the other hand, it is required that we should constantly admonish the people to whom the Bible is an unfamiliar book, "You do not know what you are losing."

"I may not," says Father Eustace in Scott's The Monastery, concerning a copy of the Scriptures, "so far forget the living in my cares for the dead, as to leave behind me that book, which is to the ignorant what, to our first parents, the tree of knowledge of good and evil unhappily proved—excellent indeed in itself, but fatal because used by those to whom it is prohibited."

At the end of the twelfth century Pope Innocent III, when denying the privilege of Bible reading to the laity, uses the unapproachable sanctity of Mount Sinai as a figure representing the holiness of the Scriptures which must not be profaned by the touch of

a secular finger, quoting for his purpose from Exod. 19. 12, 13: "*Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death; no hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, he shall not live.*" A life punishment should await the layman guilty of a sacrilegious appropriation of the Scriptures.

The spirit of our age is such, at least in America, that if the Bible were a prohibited book, the demand for it would be enormous, and the clandestine searching of its contents would be one of the most frequent diversions of the young. But as even the Roman Church has loosened its restrictions regarding Bible reading by its communicants in many countries, going so far as to provide in some instances translations in the vernacular of the people for their convenience, and as there are no other civil or ecclesiastical sovereignties in civilized lands forbidding the use of the Scriptures to the unlearned or uninitiated, this provocative to acquaintance with the Bible is lacking. Some different appeal to the inquisitiveness of the human mind is required, and among persons of refined taste an adequate one should be found in the literary primacy of the book itself.

The very ease with which the Bible may now be obtained betrays many people into the mistake of neglecting a literature which they would take great pains to know, if it were difficult to acquire; just as certain wonders in nature are disregarded by those living nearest them, while travelers come thousands of miles for the privilege of beholding them. In the days of primitive Christianity, as Chrysostom relates, women and children often carried the Gospels or other parts of the New Testament hung around their necks, and these they frequently consulted. The rich treasured in their libraries fine transcripts of the sacred writings on vellum. Complete copies of the Scriptures were exceedingly rare until the art of printing became known. Children were, therefore, encouraged to commit to memory extended passages, and Christians were continually engaged in copying portions of the Bible and transmitting them to others. Even after the printing press had multiplied the possibility of widely diffusing the knowledge of the Scriptures, and translations had been made into various tongues of Europe, the circulation of the Bible was limited not only by the cost of securing copies, but also by ecclesiastical interdicts. When William Tyndale was still a youth and a tutor in a country family, one day during a warm discussion with

some priests at his employer's table, he exclaimed that if God spared his life, ere many years he would cause a plowboy to know more of the Scriptures than did the Pope. This promise he kept, but much time elapsed before his prediction was fulfilled. Then the book came as a novelty and was read with avidity. Now it is a commonplace in every collection of books, and is in consequence neglected.

Many persons who in childhood received some fragmentary instruction in the Bible retain certain vague reminiscences of their former partial acquaintance with its contents, and these they venture to substitute for an actual familiarity with the volume. The result is a bewildering mass of ludicrous blunders whenever they are rash enough to allude to events and persons recorded in the Scriptures, and the disclosure of pathetic ignorance of the teachings of the Bible whenever they undertake to support their opinions by citations from its pages. Clever Benjamin Franklin foisted the book of Ruth upon some cultivated gentlemen at the court of France as a fine bit of Oriental literature he had unearthed, and then confounded his auditors by pointing to its place in the Bible, a work which they affected to despise. He practiced a like artifice with the prayer of Habakkuk, and deceived certain persons with an alleged fifty-first chap-

ter of Genesis, which was his own invention. A Harvard undergraduate wrote on an inquiry slip in the library, "Where can I find the story of Sisera and Jael?" The librarian wrote underneath, "In the Bible, you heathen." But the number of pagans in Christian America is very considerable if people are to be measured by that judgment. It is said that a bright young Cambridge man was asked what connection he could remember between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He answered that he could recall but one, namely, the fact that "Peter cut off the ear of the prophet Malachi." A Boston alderman boasted that he had read the whole Bible through, "from Genesis to Deuteronomy," a feat which, if he had actually performed it, probably placed him on an eminence among his fellows. It would be possible to fill many pages with such illustrations of the preposterous misinformation about the Scriptures which even intelligent and, in other respects, scholarly individuals carry around in their heads. The sad truth is that if a long array of these examples were presented to the average audience, a large proportion of them would not be recognized as absurd because their deviation from the text would not be detected.

In partial explanation of this sorry unfamiliarity with the Bible it must be remem-

bered that there is less serious reading of any kind among people in general than was formerly the case. The astonishing quantity of fictitious literature and of newspapers and other periodicals devoured by the public has crowded out those classic books of devotion, religious biography, and church history in which our forefathers used to delight themselves. Even those works which have been produced in modern times with a view to meeting the current spiritual needs of the people, and which are seductively framed to suit the popular taste, have but a temporary vogue and soon lumber the shelves of second-hand bookstores. Religious journalism is making an increasingly difficult fight to maintain an extensive influence. In this decline of serious reading the Bible inevitably shares. It is recognized as essentially a product of religion, and in our time it has gradually come to be regarded as a book of the Church, and therefore to be cherished chiefly by those who are intrusted with the custody of religious institutions or who are aspirants for sainthood. This is a fundamental error, but it must have its reckoning among the causes which have made the Bible a neglected book. A volume which contains essays, epigrams, sonnets, stories, philosophical treatises, histories, sermons, legal documents, dramas, love songs, national

anthems, war ballads, letters, orations, hymns for defeat and triumph, pilgrim songs, chants with which parties of kinsmen have lightened the weariness of journeys to great feasts, riddles, fanciful acrostics, and indeed every form of literary expression save that which may be designated as technically scientific and critical, surely does not deserve to be ignored by persons in quest of sound literature solely because it is suffused with the atmosphere of religion.

There is an old story told by St. Jerome of himself which will bear repeating in this connection. Though he was an ardent defender of simple Christianity, he was also greatly enamored of classical eloquence. He had pored over Vergil and Cicero and other pagan writers with rare gratification. One night he dreamed that he had been hastily summoned before the bar of Heaven. "Who are you?" he was asked. "I am a Christian," he answered. "Thou liest; thou art a Ciceronian," sternly observed the Judge, and at once the saint was turned over to servitors who beat him unmercifully until he agreed never to browse in a pagan book again. A similar vision might not be without salutary effect if it were sent to some of the religious leaders of our own day who, if they are to be estimated by their writings and public discourses, have

a deeper interest in other literature than that which distinguishes the Bible. It cannot be denied that a part of the people's indifference to the Scriptures is attributable to the paucity of biblical quotation they hear from the pulpit, and the infrequency with which preachers laud the beauty and vigor of the sacred writings.

But whatever may be the reasons which account for the obvious decline in popular attachment to the Bible—and there are many which need not now engage our attention—the case stands to-day practically as Professor Richard G. Moulton has described it:

> We have done almost everything that is possible with these Hebrew and Greek writings. We have overlaid them, clause by clause, with exhaustive commentaries; we have translated them, revised the translations, and quarreled over the revisions; we have discussed authenticity and inspiration, and suggested textual history with colored type; we have mechanically divided the whole into chapters and verses, and sought texts to memorize and quote; we have epitomized into handbooks and extracted school lessons; we have recast from the feminine point of view, and even from the standpoint of the next century. There is yet one thing left to do with the Bible: simply to read it.

I

The reasons which should induce us to read the Bible are many and various. For the present we may confine ourselves to those which lie in the plane of our common literary interest.

For the moment we may put aside all consideration of the moral and spiritual values inseparable from this literature, and examine it in the same spirit and with the same intention that would mark our investigation of the masterpieces of any other great people. Let us begin on a lower level of approach than our pious ancestors would have thought compatible with the inherent dignity of the Holy Scriptures. Aiming to attract the least spiritual minds possessed of a taste for literature to the noblest books ever written, we need not hesitate to avail ourselves of any legitimate point of contact which will serve that purpose.

The late Professor Harris of Yale used to give an account of a German student whom a young American met in one of the great European universities. He was deeply engrossed in archæological studies, but he was an agnostic in religion, and could not be induced to read the Bible because, he asserted, there was nothing of interest to him in its pages. The American finally called his attention to the description of the building of the Tabernacle. It immediately captivated his imagination, and he sat up late many nights studying it with consuming interest. It is possible that among those to whom these lectures are brought there are some who have thrust the Bible away from their tables as heavy or

archaic literature, possessing no interest for any but theologians, antiquarians and a few devout persons who still hold to it as the source of highest inspiration because of the hallowed traditions which attach to it. For the sake of such we may properly abandon temporarily the old injunction to search the Scriptures for the spiritual profit to be derived therefrom, and persuade them to turn back to the Bible for its literary treasures, with the assurance that, having begun with its surface values, they will proceed to a fuller acquaintance with its marvelous contents, and ultimately to a discernment of their profound significance for life.

That there should be any reluctance to pursue such a policy is evidence of the abnormal position in literature which has been assigned to the Bible, and reveals one of the most influential reasons for the decline of its popularity as a volume to be read for its own sake. Too great veneration cannot be given to the Scriptures, but to envelop them with an artificial sanctity is to lessen their appeal to the intellectual appetencies of humanity. The effect is akin to that which results from placing religion in a category by itself, occupying a mere department of life, quite apart from other areas of man's thought and activity, though it ought to be conceived as vital to the

whole of human experience. In a similar fashion, because it is primarily a body of religious literature, the Bible is often assumed to fill a comparatively narrow function, whereas for those who are familiar with its writings it holds an interest which touches every phase of man's labor and love. As a corrective to such misapprehensions the words of Emerson are worthy of reflection: "People imagine that the place which the Bible holds in the world it owes to miracles. It owes it simply to the fact that it came out of a profounder depth of thought than any other book."

The scientist Faraday was accustomed to say that highly cultivated audiences might be regarded as knowing nothing about the subject which the lecturer was discussing. It ought not to be esteemed an unwarranted act of effrontery, therefore, to announce that, apart from all its moral and religious qualities, the Bible is a deeply interesting volume, and to proceed to give the proofs of that fact, as though it had never before been declared in the hearing of men.

Those who imagine the Bible is a dull book are simply unacquainted with the wonderful variety of its contents. It is true that its genealogical tables, the Levitical and priestly system of ceremonies and services which it describes, and other racial, statistical, and

didactic matter characteristic of the Old Testament, have no elements of popular interest. Yet even these arid stretches of biblical territory, when properly interpreted in relation to the history of a great people, are not destitute of refreshment for minds qualified by natural inclination or scholarly equipment to appreciate them. Mere lists of names and tables of figures may be fascinating when their true bearings are understood. We are told that Richard Lynch Cotton, Provost of Worcester College, Oxford, would insist on scrutinizing with fidelity even such a dry production as Leviticus, on the ground "that there is always *something* in every chapter which no one can afford to let go unread." Taken as a whole, after making the few deductions intimated, the Bible is of perennial interest to all classes of persons who have a first-hand knowledge of what it contains. Its stories take a strong hold upon childhood—and there is no better test of the vitality of literature than that. The biographical tales of the Old Testament, including the portraitures of Joseph, Moses, Samson, David, Elijah, Daniel, Jonah and the rest, are unsurpassed as to living interest in any ancient or modern literature. The wars of Israel and Judah make as stirring narratives as any lover of military annals could wish. So full of the militant spirit are they

that good Bishop Ulfilas, who translated the Bible for the Goths in the middle of the fourth century, omitted the books of the Kings and Samuel because he feared they would unduly stimulate the warlike ardor of his people. President Bartlett, of Dartmouth College, in one of his baccalaureate addresses said:

> The migration of Abram from Ur of the Chaldees was a more momentous event than the fabled voyage of Æneas or the colonizing of Carthage. In comparison with the Exodus, the Anabasis was a trivial incident. Joshua's subjugation of Canaan was a great military movement, fraught with more far-reaching consequences than the Norman conquest. Jerusalem, the city of twenty-seven sieges, has as weird a history as any other city on the globe, and the Jewish race a vitality unparalleled and unique. The Galilean Sea, but thirteen miles in length, has witnessed events more marvelous than the great and classic Mediterranean. What are the laws of Solon or Lycurgus beside that decalogue and the laws of Moses—a lawgiver, says Milman, "who has exercised a more extensive and permanent influence over the destinies of mankind than any other individual in the history of the world."

"The principal books of the Old Testament," said Matthew Arnold, "are things to be deeply enjoyed." The truth of this declaration will be increasingly evident as the reader acquaints himself with these noble memorials of departed genius.

No one can question the charm of the New Testament narratives. The story of Jesus of Nazareth never abates its fascination for the

human mind and heart. His miracles and parables render the Gospels a library of wonders. The performances of his disciples are fraught with deathless interest. The first weeks and months of the infant church are replete with romance. The lives of the apostles are brimful of stirring adventure and achievement. The travels and public services of Paul, the Roman citizen and Christian missioner, are big with surprise and rich in incident. Taken in conjunction with the historic occasions which incited them, the epistles are of engrossing interest. The Bible as a whole, from the drama of creation, with which it opens, to the mysterious apocalypse on Patmos, with which it closes, is the most enthralling, to him who knows how to read it, of all the literatures that have issued from the spirit of the human race.

It was the dictum of Voltaire that in writing all styles are good that are not tiresome. The marked characteristic of the Bible writers is their naturalness and simplicity. They betray no artificiality. They were not voluntarily or consciously following any canons of literary art. They were not, with the possible exception of the poets, trying to conform rigidly to principles of literary construction which had been set for them by their predecessors, or invented by themselves for their guidance. There are no writers in the world more naïve than

they. The most casual reader will be impressed that these authors were not straining after effects. This alone is a quality which inevitably endears them to humanity. John Burroughs has pertinently said, "The literary value of the Bible doubtless arises largely from its elemental character." As men of strength who are untrammeled by the adornments of a formal culture will arrest attention and evoke affection by the native solidity of their characters, as was preeminently the fact with Abraham Lincoln, so literature which embodies without an artificial garniture the great ideas that have haunted the souls of men in all ages will surely seize and retain human interest. The simplicity of the Bible writers is not marred by childishness, otherwise it would fall short of that grasp upon the imagination which belongs to elemental literature. A comparison of the first chapter of Genesis with the absurd cosmogonies devised by pagan minds will suffice to illustrate the superiority of the primitive literature of the Hebrews, in both style and matter, over that produced in the antiquity of any other race. It is only our inveterate habit of approaching the Bible with the prepossession that it is not literature, but a treasury of divine oracles, which prevents us from deriving that intellectual pleasure from its perusal which it is calculated to in-

spire when freed from the bondage of tradition. Of the Gospel of Matthew Robert Louis Stevenson said, "I believe it would startle and move anyone, if he could make a certain effort of imagination, and read it freshly like a book, not droningly and dully like a portion of the Bible." There can be no doubt that whoever goes to the business of reading almost any portion of the Scriptures with the zest which he feels necessary for the study of any other literature will find the Bible an unending source of satisfaction.

"My experience," said Horace Bushnell, "is that the Bible is dull when I am dull. When I am really alive, and set in upon the text with a tidal pressure of living affinities, it opens, it multiplies discoveries, and reveals depths even faster than I can note them." Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the Bible is not in all its parts easy reading, even when an alert mind is concentrated upon its pages. Its documents were not composed primarily for entertainment, though many of them are replete with an interest independent of their religious quality. In answer to the charge that his writings were obscure, Robert Browning once said, "I never designedly tried to puzzle people, as some of my critics have supposed. On the other hand, I never pretended to offer such literature as should be a substitute for a cigar

or a game of dominoes for an idle man." So it must be apparent to the most casual reader that the Apostle Paul, to use one illustration out of several which might be adduced, was not writing to beguile the tedium of the audiences who were to listen to certain of his profound epistles. In some instances he was dealing with vast themes in a subtle philosophic fashion unquestionably difficult for persons of humble intelligence to fathom, and which have provoked an imposing quantity of interpretative literature, such as commentaries and theological treatises. Several of the sacred writings in both collections of the Bible must be allowed to fall under this differentiation. Yet these are books which will exercise a powerful spell over certain minds. M. de Saci of Port Royal, for example, took special delight in the Epistles of St. Paul, had them bound separately, and always carried them with him. "Let them do what they like with me," he said, anticipating imprisonment in the Bastille, "let them put me where they please; I fear nothing if only I can have my St. Paul with me."

Interest in the Bible as literature is deepened by recognizing that it is a unique collection of writings which it is an inaccuracy to call a book. It acquired this designation through the fact that its several parts were brought together into a single volume, though

it is an accumulation of sixty-six separate books. This compilation was not referred to as a book until a comparatively late period, though the name Bible arose in the fourth century, when Chrysostom called the collection Biblia, a neuter plural which in the thirteenth century in the Western Church was mistaken for a feminine singular, and thus gave us the name Bible. St. Jerome, who died in 420 A. D., called the Scriptures a Divine Library; and Edmund Burke said they were "An infinite collection of the most varied and most venerable literature." We are told that by a legal enactment in England in 1516 the Bible received the designation of Bibliotheca, which signifies a library. The story of the bringing together of these documents into one authoritative repository is most interesting, but need not be rehearsed in this connection.

It is of the utmost importance, however, that we should realize that the Bible consists of what has survived out of a much wider literature. The writers who have found their way into the Scriptures refer to a variety of lost books. Many of these were used by the compilers of the Pentateuch and the chroniclers of the historical books. Among them are The Acts of Solomon, The Book of the Chronicles of King David, The Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, The Books of Nathan

the Prophet and of Gad the Seer, The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, The Visions of Iddo the Seer, The Book of the Wars of Jehovah, The Book of Jasher, The Histories of Shemaiah the Prophet, and The Acts of Uzziah. The apocryphal books form a distinct collection which were not admitted to the canon of Scripture because of their alleged inferiority, though several of them reveal remarkable excellence. But beyond the perished books, the names of which have been preserved, and quotations from which occur in our Bible, existed still more ancient and simpler forms of literature, to some of which references are detected by scholars, and from all of which, as long as they were extant, later writers might take what they required or thought useful. These included old Semitic legends, many of which had not been reduced to writing, ballads and folk-songs, camp stories, historical notes, codes of ancient laws, collections of proverbs, oral tales of the patriarchs, inscriptions and other memorabilia. Much of this could not be accurately classified as literature, but it provided the substance out of which literature was evolved. A striking illustration of the disappearance of literary materials which formerly existed among the Hebrews is found in 1 Kings 4. 32, where it is recorded that Solomon wrote a thousand and five songs,

though there are but two remaining which are credited to him. We can scarcely doubt that in the survivals of Hebrew literature which have descended to us in the Bible we have the noblest intellectual products of an ancient and wonderful people, and devout minds are confident that their preservation has been due to the supervision exercised over them by Divine Providence. Nor can we fail to discern that, in the main, the determination of the books deserving a place in the Holy Scriptures was by an elective process which united a refined literary judgment to deep spiritual intuition.

In these survivals of a more extensive literature we have an unexampled array of beauty and strength. A careful study of these writings will convince the lover of humane letters that William Watson was not far from sheer fact when he said that "every kind of literary magnificence is supremely exemplified in the Bible," and that Sir Thomas Browne was not extravagant when he declared that, even if the Scriptures had been the work of man alone, they would have been "the most singular and superlative piece that hath been extant since the creation." In a similar strain of exalted praise writes Froude: "The Bible, thoroughly known, is a literature of itself, the rarest and the richest in all departments of thought or imagination which exists."

"Its light," said John Henry Newman, speaking of the Bible, "is like the body of heaven in its clearness; its vastness like the bosom of the sea; its variety like the scenes of nature."

"It is the grandest group of writings in the world," said Ruskin, "put into the grandest languages of the world, translated afterward into every language in the Christian world, and is the guide of all the arts and acts of that world which have been noble, fortunate, and happy."

"What a book!" exclaimed Heinrich Heine. After a Sunday of intolerable dullness at Heligoland he took up the Bible in desperation, as he records, and after reading it for hours to his edification as well as his entertainment, he breaks forth into eulogy: "Vast and wide as the world, rooted in the abysses of creation, and towering up beyond the blue secrets of heaven! Sunrise and sunset, birth and death, promise and fulfillment, the whole drama of humanity, are all in this book."

II

That the Bible is indispensable in any educational process which involves the higher culture of the human mind must be conceded, if it possesses the values ascribed to it by the

men of genius whose laudations have just been quoted. This is indeed a function which the Bible is claimed to exercise by some of the most reliable exponents of literary judgment. Goethe's experience is noteworthy:

> When, in my youth, my imagination, ever active, bore me away, now hither, now thither, and when all this blending of history and fable, of mythology and religion, threatened to unsettle my mind, gladly then did I flee toward those Eastern countries. I buried myself in the first books of Moses, and there, amidst those wandering tribes, I found myself at once in the grandest solitudes and in the grandest societies.

In addressing a company of students, Charles A. Dana, one of America's greatest journalists, said:

> Of all books, the most indispensable and the most useful, the one whose knowledge is the most effective, is the Bible. . . . I am considering it now not as a religious book, but as a manual of utility, of professional preparation and professional use for a journalist. There is perhaps no book whose style is more suggestive and more instructive, from which you learn more directly that sublime simplicity which never exaggerates, which recounts the greatest events with solemnity, of course, but without sentimentality or affectation, none which you open with such confidence and lay down with such reverence.

As a child John Ruskin was drilled every day in reading or reciting the Scriptures, and this process was continued until he went to Oxford. He prints the list of chapters which

his mother required him to commit to memory, and "with which," he says, "thus learned, she established my soul in life," adding the following:

> And truly, though I have picked up the elements of a little further knowledge—in mathematics, meteorology, and the like, in after life—and owe not a little to the teaching of many people, this maternal installation of my mind in the property of chapters I count very confidently the most precious, and, on the whole, the one essential part of all my education.

Not less impressive are the words of Charles Dudley Warner:

> Wholly apart from its religious or from its ethical value, the Bible is the one book that no intelligent person who wishes to come into contact with the world of thought and to share the ideas of the great minds of the Christian era can afford to be ignorant of. All modern literature and all art are permeated with it. There is scarcely a great work in the language that can be fully understood and enjoyed without this knowledge, so full is it of allusions and illustrations from the Bible. This is true of fiction, of poetry, of economic and philosophic works, and also of the scientific and even agnostic treatises. . . . It is in itself almost a liberal education, as many great masters in literature have testified.

What this author says is amply confirmed by an examination of English literature, to go no farther. We are not aware how extensive is the influence of the Bible upon our foremost writers until we have carefully pondered the works of such poets as Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Scott, Cowper, Wordsworth,

Tennyson, Young, the Brownings, Longfellow and others, and of such prose writers as Bacon, Addison, Johnson, Macaulay, Carlyle, Irving, Ruskin, Lowell, and many more. Spenser, we are told, studied the prophetic writings before he wrote his Faerie Queene. Lord Bacon has seventy allusions to the Scriptures in twenty-four of his essays. In Bishop Charles Wordsworth's book on Shakespeare's Knowledge and Use of the Bible allusions or quotations in thirty-seven plays are indicated, a fact of great significance when it is remembered that Shakespeare died only four years after the King James Version was published in full. There are more than one hundred allusions to the Bible in Mrs. Browning's Aurora Leigh. A careful student of Tennyson has asserted that there are nearly three hundred direct references to the Bible in his poems. By actual count upward of three hundred and thirty references to the Bible have been found in works of Longfellow. An industrious man has reckoned that about five thousand Scripture quotations and allusions are to be found in the writings of Ruskin, who says that to the discipline of his early years in the Bible he owes "the best part of my taste in literature, and, once knowing the Bible it was not possible for me to write superficial and formal English." Sir Walter Scott had the Bible, especially the

Old Testament, almost by heart. One of his novels, The Monastery, is a perfect storehouse of Scripture. He is said generally in his writings to have quoted the Bible from memory. These instances, and they could be indefinitely extended, give force to the saying of Samuel Taylor Coleridge that "intense study of the Bible will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style." Numerous writers who seldom quote or make direct allusions to the Scriptures obviously have been greatly affected by them. Of such is Thomas Carlyle, who in many passages writes like a Hebrew prophet, showing unmistakable evidences of deep study of the Bible.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the influence of the English Bible upon our language. Of the Authorized Version Huxley says: "It is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of a merely literary form." Macaulay, referring to the same translation, calls it "that stupendous work, a book, which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power. . . . Whoever would acquire a knowledge of pure English must study King James' Version of the Scriptures." To this we may join the testimony of Green, the historian of the English people:

As a mere literary monument, the English version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue. Its perpetual use made it from the instant of its appearance the standard of our language.

It formed, we must repeat, the whole literature which was practically accessible to ordinary Englishmen; and when we recall the number of common phrases which we owe to great authors, the bits of Shakespeare, or Milton, or Dickens, or Thackeray, which unconsciously weave themselves into our ordinary talk, we shall better understand the strange mosaic of biblical words and phrases which colored English talk two hundred years ago. The wealth of picturesque allusion and illustration which we borrow from a thousand books, our fathers were forced to borrow from one; and the borrowing was the easier and the more natural that the range of Hebrew literature fitted it for the expression of every phase of feeling.

George Saintsbury, in his History of the Elizabethan Period of English Literature, says: "The plays of Shakespeare and the English Bible are and ever will be the twin monuments, not merely of their own period, but of the perfection of English, the complete expressions of the literary capacities of the language." The Roman Catholic Bishop Faber, speaking of the Authorized Version of our English Bible, says:

It lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells which the convert scarcely knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be things rather than words. . . . The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. It is the representative of a man's best moments; all that there

has been about him of soft and gentle and pure and penitent and good, speaks to him forever out of his English Bible.

The influence of the Bible upon our literature descends to the very minutiæ of composition. In his Handbook of the English Tongue Dr. Joseph Angus says: "The Bible is the richest specimen we have of the beauty and force of the old Anglo-Saxon speech." It has been computed that more than nine tenths of the words in the Authorized Version of the English Bible are Anglo-Saxon, which, as we know, furnishes the great bulk of words in ordinary use to-day. The translations which preceded that of 1611 were put into speech which the people could understand, and the Authorized Version is largely built on this foundation. In a book on The Bible in Modern Life, recently published, Joseph S. Auerbach gives a chapter of Bible words and phrases, taken almost at random from his reading of the Scriptures, which are current in modern speech and literature. To run them through is to meet many surprises. This author very truthfully says that, while the reasoning processes of the biblical writers "were often far below those of the authors of the classics of the world," yet these men were preeminent in "illuminating word and phrase, of such power that they have passed not only into the

books of our literature, but become part of the daily speech of men."

It would not be just, however, to say that the pervasive influence of the biblical literature is due chiefly to the skill of the scholarly translators who gave us the English Version. This power seems rather to reside in the literature itself, and to be an inseparable element of its structure. Hebrew and Hellenic Greek, as Green says, "lent themselves with curious felicity to purposes of translation." The late Milton S. Terry, in characterizing the languages in which the Bible was produced, said:

> But if the Greek may be likened to the Parthenon, and the Aramæan to the broken relics of fallen monarchies, the Hebrew tongue is like the temple of Solomon —a wonder of the world. It is half hieroglyphic. Its letters are a picture-gallery. Its emotional expressiveness adds infinite charm to its sacred literature. It appears in full development in its most ancient records, as if it had been crystallized into imperishable form by the marvels of the Exodus and the fires of Sinai.

When men began to translate the Scriptures into the languages of modern Europe, a potent spell seemed to be exercised over their toil; a beneficent influence seemed to be imparted to the very style in which they employed their gifts. It was an occasion of wonder to those familiar with Tyndale's other writings, which had no qualities lifting them above the ordinary level of his times, that he produced an

English version of the Scriptures of the highest literary excellence. To this day it excites the unstinted admiration of the critics. A similar benignancy appears to have favored other translators.

But it is the substance of the Scriptures, rather than their form, to which we must attribute their most enduring influence upon other literatures, as has already been suggested. Very significant are the words of Robert Louis Stevenson concerning the Bible biographies:

> Written in the East, these characters live forever in the West; written in one province, they pervade the world; penned in rude times, they are prized more and more as civilization advances; product of antiquity, they come home to the business and bosoms of men, women, and children in modern days.

It is interesting to note the confession made by Hall Caine the novelist respecting the source whence he drew his inspiration:

> Whatever strong situations I have in my books are not of my creation, but are taken from the Bible. The Deemster is the story of The Prodigal Son. The Bondman is the story of Esau and Jacob. The Scapegoat is the story of Eli and his sons; and The Manxman is the story of David and Uriah.

"I would not now exchange for any amount of money," said Eugene Field, "the acquaintance with the Bible that was drummed into me when a boy."

It is needless to multiply illustrations of this character. The dramatic element which runs through all the narrative portions of the Bible has projected itself into many of the finest specimens of fiction that our language holds, just as in painting, sculpture, music and other fine arts the themes of the Scriptures have found ample expression. In our day the dramatists are busy with the matchless stories of the Bible, and find in their naked delineations of human passion the surest models of character-portraiture.

III

Let this hurried and fragmentary survey of the power which the Bible has exerted over our English literature be concluded by noting the affection shown by a few famous individuals for particular portions of the Scriptures. Tennyson expressed boundless admiration for the Sermon on the Mount and for the Parables of Jesus. "Perfection beyond compare," he called them, with which judgment Browning agreed, according to the testimony of his son. Gladstone lovingly referred to "that sublime and precious production, the first chapter of Genesis." Renan called the Gospel of Luke "the most beautiful book in existence." Peter the Great is said to have known the Epistles of Paul by heart. Herder declared of John's

Gospel, "That little book is a still deeper sea, in which the sun and stars are mirrored, and if there are eternal truths (and such there are) for the human race, they are found in the Gospel of John." Coleridge said, "I think St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is the most profound work in existence," and also, "The most gentlemanly letter ever written by the most perfect gentleman is in my opinion St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon." Macaulay gave great praise to that passage in the eighth chapter of Romans, beginning, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Napoleon Bonaparte expressed deep appreciation of the Pentateuch in certain parts and at St. Helena proposed to write a history of the campaigns of Moses. About five minutes before his death Dean Burgon said, "Give me a pencil, and now St. Mark." The book was laid before him, that he might be able to find the passage he desired, and in a moment he was gone. Bishop Ken's Bible fell open at the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and J. M. Barrie says that his mother's Bible seemed to open of itself at the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel. When Johnson visited Collins in his illness, and asked him what had been his companion in trouble, the poet held out a little copy of the New Testament, and said, "I have but one book, but that book is the best of all." William

Watson the poet eulogizes Isaiah, but also declares that David's lament over Jonathan is "the most perfect elegy in all literature," and the song of Deborah and Barak "the most superb expression of the intoxication of triumph." Andrew D. White, diplomat and statesman, the first president of Cornell University, who places the Bible at the top of his list of the books which have given him the greatest profit and pleasure, has a special fondness for the Psalms, the nobler portions of Isaiah, and the sixth chapter of Micah. In the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount, St. James's definition of pure and undefiled religion, and St. Paul's description of charity are singled out for laudation. He says that in perfection of English diction there is in the whole range of literature nothing to surpass the story of Joseph and his brethren. A servant of Alfred de Musset showed a New Testament to a friend who came to inquire about the author; and said, "I know not what Alfred found in that book, but he always latterly had it under his pillow, that he might read it when he would." Charles Dickens wrote to his youngest son, who was about to leave home:

> I put a New Testament among your books for the very same reasons, and with the same hopes, that made me write an easy account of it for you when you were a little child. Because it is the best book that ever was, or will be, known in the world; and because it teaches

you the best lessons by which any human creature who tries to be truthful and faithful to duty can possibly be guided.

Said Sydney Dobell:

I once learned the New Testament by rote, and I cannot unlearn the beauty of those sweet old Saxon phrases in which I have thought so long. Full of the light that never was on sea or shore—the light of the holiest, happiest and best recollections—I seem in using them to mingle a new element with earthly speech, and relieve, in some sort, with their glory the dreary lifelessness of words.

Thus wrote Erasmus in a famous passage:

I wish that even the weakest woman should read the Gospel—should read the Epistles of Paul. And I wish that these were translated into all languages, so that they might be read and understood not only by Scots and Irishmen, but also by Turks and Saracens. . . . I long that the husbandman should sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plow, that the weaver should hum them to the tune of his shuttle, that the traveler should beguile with these stories the tedium of his journey.

Said Dr. Adolf Deissmann:

The New Testament is the people's book. When Luther, therefore, took the New Testament from the learned and gave it to the people, we can only regard him as restoring what was the people's own. . . . Time has transformed the book of the people into the book of humanity.

It is to introduce to the deeper riches of this great library those who are not sufficiently aware of their inexhaustible worth that these lectures are given.

CHAPTER II

The Poetry and Oratory of the Bible

"Literature," says Lord Morley, "consists of all the books—and there are not so many—where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form." He might have had the Bible before him as he framed this definition, so admirably does it fit the sacred writings of that massive library. As we proceed to investigate this literature, we are almost immediately impressed with its astonishing diversity, and a further examination convinces the student that, by reason of this quality, it is calculated to find acceptance with all classes of minds. Its books were composed by a great variety of persons, living under many different conditions, and impelled by numerous distinctive considerations. Its range of subjects is very wide. As Dr. Arthur S. Peake, of England, has said:

> It has a universality like that of Shakespeare, appealing to every emotion, reflecting every situation. It has a message for all our moods, an answer to our deepest perplexities, a response to our sorest needs. It meets us at levels of our being which other literature cannot

touch, it lends our spirits wings that we may soar to heights which would otherwise be unreached. And when we are neither mounting upwards on flights of ecstasy, nor in the gloomy valley of depression, but moving on the somewhat weary path of life, it is our intimate companion, relieving the tedious monotony of the way, cheering and strengthening us when we faint beneath the burden we are called to bear.

These words describe one of the sublimest functions of literature in general, without the fulfilling of which nothing written deserves to be called literature in the higher signification of the term. But the Bible overtops all other literatures in the world in the suitability of its messages to every conceivable need of the human spirit. It was produced by all sorts and conditions of men, and cannot therefore fail to make its appeal to an equal diversity of individual cravings. Dean Farrar has well said:

Touched by one of these many fingers, our hearts cannot but respond. At the turning of a page we may listen to Solomon the magnificent, or Amos the herdsman; to Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian conqueror, or Matthew the Galilean publican. If St. Paul be too difficult for us, we have the practical plainness of St. Peter; if St. John soars too high for us on the eagle wings of his mysticism, we can rejoice in the simple sweetness of St. Luke; if we find the Apocalypse too passionate and enigmatic, we can rest in the homely counsels of St. James. The Scriptures . . . have poetry for the student, history for the statesman, psalms for the temple, proverbs for the mart. They have appeals, denunciations, arguments, stories of battle, songs of love.

They have mountains and valleys, shadow and sunshine, calm and tempest, stormy waves and still waters, lilies of the green pasture and the shadow of a great rock in weary lands.

For minds that are attuned to high reasonings there are philosophical meditations and theological disquisitions, but for the humbler intelligence there is that which satisfies the commonest need. Diligent scholars are increasingly amazed at the vast wealth of thought in the Bible as they multiply their endeavors to mine it; while untutored intellects, coming freshly to the privilege of reading it, are rejoiced at the naturalness and simple homeliness of many of its parts.

Two days before his death Martin Luther wrote: "No one can understand Vergil's Bucolics unless he has been for five years a herdsman. No one can understand Vergil's Georgics unless he has been for five years a husbandman. No one can fully understand Cicero's Letters unless he has been actively engaged for twenty-five years in a great commonwealth. Let no one think he has fully appreciated the Holy Scriptures unless he has governed congregations for a hundred years with prophets like Elijah and Elisha, John the Baptist, Christ and the Apostles."

This is not intemperate language, considering the measureless depths of biblical thought;

yet the marvel of the Bible lies in its transparency, notwithstanding its profundity. Ministers of religion are repeatedly astonished at the facility with which unlearned persons absorb many of its sublimest teachings. It is as a French writer has declared: "The waters of Holy Scripture have this peculiar property, that they are proportioned and suited to the needs of every soul. A lamb can walk therein, and at the same time they are so deep that an elephant can swim in them." Said Novalis, "The Bible begins nobly with Paradise, the symbol of youth, and concludes with the eternal kingdom, the Holy City." Between these points stretch vast areas of diversified literature, unparalleled in the written records of the world, and providing nourishment for all grades of intellectual and spiritual being.

"The Scriptures," said Sir William Jones, "contain more sublimity, more exquisite beauty, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence than could be collected from all other books that were ever composed in any age or in any idiom." "There are," said John Milton, "no songs to be compared with the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics equal to those the Scriptures can teach us." Yet it must be kept in mind, as a modern scholar has reminded us, that "neither of the two collections of books that make up

the Bible is arranged from the point of view of art, but from that of religious value; they are collections not of *belles lettres* but of sacred writings." That is merely to say that they are not artificially constructed masterpieces of literary craftsmanship, but free, spontaneous, exuberant expressions of life, in which religion is the dominant tone.

I

It is in the realm of poetry that we shall first test the encomiums which have been pronounced upon the Bible as literature. When Victor Hugo was asked, "Is it not difficult to write epic poetry?" he responded, "No, easy—or impossible." The assertion is probably true of any great poetry, whatever its form. What one early observes with respect to the poetic effusions which abound in the Bible is that the writers of these inspired verses evidently did their work with the utmost freedom and facility, if indeed it would not be proper to say that they accomplished it almost without the consciousness that they were producing anything of large consequence.

"What poets those old Hebrews were!" exclaimed John Bright, who was all his lifetime a devout student of the Bible; and Dr. George Adam Smith says of this element in Hebrew

literature: "In one aspect it is the nearest poetry of all, the first which we learned; through the open windows of which we had our earliest visions of time, of space, of eternity, and of God. Its rhythms haunt our noblest prose; its lyrics are our most virile and enduring hymns."

In speaking of the Bible as poetry, Walt Whitman refers to what he calls "the cumulus of associations of the Bible as a poetic entity, and of every portion of it. Not the old edifice only," he says, "the congeries also of events, and struggles, and surroundings, of which it has been the scene and motive—even the horrors, dreads, deaths. How many ages and generations have brooded and wept and agonized over this book! What untellable joys and ecstasies, what support to martyrs at the stake from it! . . . Of its thousands there is not a verse, not a word, but is thick-studded with human emotion."

Joseph Addison may be safely quoted as a reliable judge of the worth of Hebrew poetry. "Homer has innumerable flights that Vergil was not able to reach," he declares, "and in the Old Testament we find several passages more elevated and sublime than any in Homer" . . . "After perusing the Book of Psalms, let a judge of the beauties of poetry read a literal translation of Homer or Pindar, and he will

find in these last two such an absurdity and confusion of style, with such a comparative poverty of imagination, as will make him sensible of the vast superiority of the Scripture style."

It is one of the requisites for effective poetry that it shall be musical. The Bible is singularly happy in meeting this test. Many persons will sympathize with the rabbi who said, "I should like to have some anthems composed to suit certain passages in the Minor Prophets." We know how copiously this has been done for the Psalms and other more detached passages of the Bible, including a few from the New Testament. Many of these, especially from the Old Testament, retain their sonorousness after they have been rendered into English, so that it is almost impossible to recite them in that tongue without falling into musical cadences. Numerous passages when read understandingly, as Tennyson used to interpret them by his voice, are melodious to a remarkable degree.

It enhances the literary importance of the Bible to remember that all we have of the poetry of ancient Israel, and all that we know of the poetic art among that people, we have derived from the Old Testament Scriptures. The Bible, including the Apocrypha, as already explained, contains the entire extant literature

of the Hebrews of the olden time. It is also to be remembered that in the case of any primitive people, so scholars versed in antiquities affirm, all discourse intended for publicity or for memorial purposes will be found clothed in poetical forms. Poetry is older than prose. It has been called "the mother tongue of the human race." This will account for the fact that, in addition to those books which are distinctly poetical, we have large quantities of poetry scattered through other sections of the Bible, particularly in the historical and prophetical writings. "We think," wrote Macaulay, "that as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines." Though ably supported by its brilliant author, that proposition may not be convincing to every mind, without important qualifications; yet it is undeniable that much of the grandest poetry of every nation is sung in its infancy. In the Bible we are dealing with the ancient literature of the Hebrews, and it is natural to find here exalted utterances of their primal speech.

It does not fall within the scope of these lectures to deal with matters of technique in literary composition, but it may be useful to us in attempting to acquire a deeper appreciation of Hebrew poetry to pause long enough to consider superficially its general principles

of construction. Poetic forms among the Hebrews were comparatively simple, the true poetical value being found in the striking imagery and fullness of emotion expressed therein. There is a mechanical structure, however, to which their poems ordinarily conform. The laws of Hebrew meter are deduced entirely from the poetry itself, and not from any tradition which has descended from earliest times. The discovery of these laws is regarded as an achievement of modern scholarship. The poetic line—a limited word-group—is the first poetical unit, a line easily and comfortably pronounced in a single breath. Such lines detach themselves with clearness in all poetical parts of the Old Testament. In Hebrew poetry "the end of the line uniformly coincides with a break in the sense." The second poetical unit is the verse, formed in the majority of cases by two lines regularly combined. The underlying principle of poetic construction may be called parallelism, the balancing of verses in such a way as to present the ideas contained therein as synonymous, antithetic and synthetic. An example of the first is herewith taken from Psalm 78:

Give ear, O my people, to my law:
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,

Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of Jehovah,
And his strength, and his wondrous works that he hath done.

From the tenth chapter of Proverbs we may take an illustration of the second, or antithetic, classification:

A wise son maketh a glad father;
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Treasures of wickedness profit nothing;
But righteousness delivereth from death.

Jehovah will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish;
But he thrusteth away the desire of the wicked.

For the synthetic arrangement, which naturally lends itself to variety of formation, let us read two familiar verses from Psalm 37:

I have been young, and now am old;
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his seed begging bread.

All the day long he dealeth graciously, and lendeth;
And his seed is blessed.

To this we may add the beautiful description of a worthy woman found in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs, beginning as follows:

A worthy woman who can find?
For her price is far above rubies.

The heart of her husband trusteth in her,
And he shall have no lack of gain.

She doeth him good and not evil
All the days of her life.

She seeketh wool and flax,
And worketh willingly with her hands.

She is like the merchant-ships;
She bringeth her bread from afar.

The principles thus briefly illustrated the scholars tell us hold good in the poetry of the ancient Babylonians and Assyrians, and perhaps in a less developed form among the early Egyptians. It must be kept in mind, however, that these are only general rules, to which there are numerous exceptions. Rhyme, when it occurs in Hebrew poetry, seems to be accidental rather than studied, though some critics believe that the writers who used it were conscious of the performance and relished it.

The genius of Hebrew poetry is other than that of the poetry with which English-speaking people are familiar in particulars more essential than metrical arrangement. By virtue of the narrower civilization and the more meager accompaniments of his life, the Hebrew poet had less to quicken his imagination or develop his creative gifts than falls to the lot of men living under the favor of a more opulent life. Alluding to the fact that our word *poet* signifies a *maker*, George Adam Smith says:

> Those who among the Hebrews correspond to the Aryan poets call themselves singers, minstrels, shepherds of words, comparers, bewailers, and the like—anything

but makers. The verbs which describe their functions express not the power of creation but the capacity for impression; not the art of building or of ornament so much as the process of outpouring and the spirit of urgency. The singers rose from and were inspired by less coherent forms of life than our own, and this social looseness, along with their people's ignorance of architecture and other constructive arts, has had its effect on their poetry.

What is here called "the capacity for impression" is exemplified in the representations of the phenomena of nature which the Hebrew poet made from the somewhat restricted fields of observation which were open to him. Alexander von Humboldt expressed his astonishment to find a single psalm—the 104th—portraying "with a few bold touches the heavens and the earth—the whole image of the Cosmos." It has been said that "the thunder storms of Thomson, of Vergil, and of Homer, are inferior to that of David—Psalm 18—both in graphic power and in sublimity of use." Professor Francis Bowen declares: "Indeed I know not anything in all Greek, Latin, or English poetry, that matches in sublimity and grandeur the magnificent sweep of this description of the providence of God as manifested in the phenomena of nature." Let us rehearse the lines:

Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations also of the mountains quaked
And were shaken because he was wroth.

There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
And fire out of his mouth devoured:
Coals were kindled by it.
He bowed the heavens also, and came down;
And thick darkness was under his feet.
And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly;
Yea, he soared upon the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his hiding place, his pavilion round about him,
Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
At the brightness before him his thick clouds passed,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
Jehovah also thundered in the heavens,
And the Most High uttered his voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
And he sent out his arrows and scattered them;
Yea, lightnings manifold, and discomfited them.
Then the channels of waters appeared,
And the foundations of the world were laid bare
At thy rebuke, O Jehovah,
At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
He sent from on high, he took me;
He drew me out of many waters.

Another description of the appearance of God in a thunder storm, scarcely less majestic, is found in the twenty-ninth Psalm. It portrays "the progress of the storm from the peaks of Lebanon down the mountain flanks and out upon the desert."

Poetry implies pictures. A poem without pageantry is ordinary prose strung to a metrical arrangement. Imagery must abound. Metaphors and similes, emblems and symbols, flags and banners, heralds and trumpeters of speech must be marshaled before the mind's

vision; otherwise there is no poetry, and Byron's contemptuous, though not altogether just, criticism of Wordsworth will be pertinent to the versifier—he will be one

> Who both by precept and example shows
> That prose is verse and verse is merely prose.

In what is known as The Song of Moses—Deut. 32—a plenitude of imagery is employed, as we have seen to be the case with the poems already considered, and as we shall find to be true of all that are yet to be observed. Note with what freedom, what absence of effort, this poem begins:

Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak;
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
My speech shall distill as the dew;
As the small rain upon the tender grass,
And as the showers upon the herb.

Then follows a figure for God which was used by the chronicler in the books of Samuel, David, and the later psalmists, Isaiah, Habakkuk, and other orator-poets:

For I will proclaim the name of Jehovah:
Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

The Rock, his work is perfect;
For all his ways are justice:
A God of faithfullness and without iniquity,
Just and right is he.

Repeatedly the poet returns to this figure,

with what effect one can easily discern when he remembers what rocks and mountain summits must have meant to the Israelites during their nomad life. The providential care for Israel which Jehovah exercised is then described in immortal stanzas:

Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations:
Ask thy father, and he will show thee;
Thine elders, and they will tell thee.

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.

For Jehovah's portion is his people;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

He found him in a desert land,
And in the waste howling wilderness;
He compassed him about, he cared for him,
He kept him as the apple of his eye.

As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,
That fluttereth over her young,
He spread abroad his wings, he took them,
He bare them on his pinions.

Jehovah alone did lead him,
And there was no foreign god with him.

He made him to ride on the high places of the earth,
And he did eat the increase of the field;
And he made him to suck honey out of the rock,
And oil out of the flinty rock;

Butter of the herd, and milk of the flock,
With fat of lambs,
And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,
With the finest of the wheat;
And of the blood of the grape thou drankest wine.

The entire poem is worthy of deep study, and discloses extraordinary power of vivid description and lofty emotion. But we must turn to another type of poetry in which the Bible excels. Our example is the Song of the Bow, which the chronicler in 2 Samuel has taken from the Book of Jashar, David's Dirge for Saul and Jonathan:

Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!
How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa,
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings:
For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,
The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided:
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel,

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan is slain upon thy high places.

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!

The Ode of Deborah in Judg. 5, which has been described by a modern critic as "a song that for force and fire is worthy to be placed alongside the noblest battle-odes in any language," is too long for complete recital here, but we cannot forbear to insert "the thrilling section of the song which tells of the slaying of Sisera by Jael, the wife of a Kenite, or the dramatic delineation of the longing of the mother of Sisera for the home-coming of her son."

Blessed above women shall Jael be,
The wife of Heber the Kenite;
Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

He asked water, and she gave him milk;
She brought him butter in a lordly dish.

She put her hand to the tent-pin,
And her right hand to the workmen's hammer;

And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote
through his head;
Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples.

At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay;
At her feet he bowed, he fell:
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

Through the window she looked forth, and cried,
The mother of Sisera cried through the lattice,
Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

Her wise ladies answered her,
Yea, she returned answer to herself,

Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil?
A damsel, two damsels to every man;
To Sisera a spoil of dyed garments,
A spoil of dyed garments embroidered,
Of dyed garments embroidered on both sides, on the
necks of the spoil?

So let all thine enemies perish, O Jehovah:
But let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth
forth in his might.

Though they are all deserving of studious attention, we can do no more than mention the titles of other poems imbedded in the historical records of the ancient Hebrews, such as: The Oracles of Balaam, in Num. 23 and 24; The Song of Moses and Miriam, in Exod. 15; Jacob's Prophecy concerning his Sons, in Gen. 49; The Blessing of Moses, in Deut. 33; Hannah's Song of Thanksgiving, in 1 Sam. 2; David's Song of Praise, in 2 Sam. 22; another

edition of which is Psalm 18; David's reputed Swan Song in the next chapter of the same book; The Psalm of Thanksgiving, in 1 Chron. 16; to which must be added those fragments and lesser poems—The Revenge of Lamech, in Gen. 4. 23, 24; The Curse of Canaan, in Gen. 9. 25-27; The Oracle to Hagar, in Gen. 16. 11, 12; Isaac's Blessings on Jacob and Esau, in Gen. 27. 27-29, 39, 40; The Song of the Well, in Num. 21. 17, 18; Joshua's Address to the Sun and Moon, in Josh. 10. 12, 13; and The Priestly Blessing recorded in Num. 6. 24-26:

Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee:
Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

Lyric poetry naturally predominates in Hebrew literature, and the Hebrews lead the world in this kind of poetry, as even critics without religious prepossessions in their favor have been forced to admit. "Hebrew poetry," says Bishop Jebb, "is universal poetry, the poetry of all languages and of all peoples." In no biblical poetry is this truth more impressively exhibited than in the Psalms. The universality of the adaptation of the Hebrew Hymn Book to the spiritual needs of men is nothing short of marvelous. Gladstone declares:

In the Psalms is the whole music of the human heart, when touched by the hand of its maker, in all its tones that whisper or swell: for every hope and fear, for every sigh and every pang, for every form of strength and languor, of disquietude and rest.

Charles Kingsley, in describing the functions of the poet, says:

What a man wants, what art wants, perhaps what the maker of them both wants, is a poet who shall begin by confessing that he is as other men are, and shall sing about things which concern all men, in language which all men can understand.

These requirements the Psalms fulfill in a magnificent way.

Said John Calvin:

I am in the habit of calling this book (The Psalms) not inappropriately The Anatomy of All Parts of the Soul, for not an affection will anyone find in himself, an image of which is not reflected in this mirror.

Said Athanasius:

He who uses the Psalms is as one who speaks his own words, and each one sings them as if they had been written for his own case, and not as if they had been spoken by some one else, or meant to apply to some one else.

Said Bishop Wordsworth:

The universality of the Psalter is evident from this consideration: every other book of the Old Testament has its counterpart in the New. The books of Moses and other historical books have their correspondence in the Gospels and the Acts; the didactic books have theirs in the Epistles; the prophets have theirs in the Apocalypse; but the Psalter has no echo in the New

Testament. It is its own echo; it belongs to both Testaments. It speaks of Christ, and Christ speaks in it. It is the hymn book of the universal church.

"When the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato are no longer read," said Rabbi Levy, "the Psalms of David will still be joyously sung." The popularity of these lyrics is unmatched, as their literary and devotional excellence is unsurpassed. There is no book in the Bible perhaps with which more persons are familiar, and no poetry from which we need less to bring illustrated excerpts for our present purpose than the Psalms. It is sufficient to point to this superb collection of sacred songs, and bid everyone satisfy himself with their celestial melody. It has been appropriated by all kinds of men, in every walk of life, and for innumerable occasions. The fitness of a psalm for a specific experience has frequently been startlingly shown in historic events. Let us take a single example from the early records of our own country:

The scene is the first Colonial Congress in 1774. To the proposal that the session be opened with prayer Mr. Jay of New York and Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina objected on the ground that there existed such a diversity of religious sentiments among the members as made it impracticable for them to join in the same act of worship. Then glorious old

Sam Adams arose, and avowing that he was no bigot, said: "I can hear a prayer from any man of piety who is at the same time a friend to his country." A clergyman was thereupon invited to perform the sacred office. He read the psalm for the day [second] in the order of his church. Bancroft says that "it seemed as if Heaven itself was uttering its oracle." Intelligence had just been received of the terrible bombardment of Boston. The New Englanders present believed that the lives of their friends were being taken by their foes at that very moment. They were profoundly moved as they listened to the ringing sentences of the thirty-fifth psalm, beginning:

Strive thou, O Jehovah, with them that strive with me:
Fight thou against them that fight against me.

Take hold of shield and buckler,
And stand up for my help.

Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them
that pursue me;
Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

Let them be put to shame and brought to dishonor that
seek after my soul:
Let them be turned back and confounded that devise
my hurt.

Let them be as chaff before the wind,
And the angel of Jehovah driving them on.

Several volumes containing hundreds of

impressive stories of the uses eminent men have made of the Psalms in critical events of their lives have been issued. One of these has recently appeared in its fourth edition after many reprints. It is called The Psalms in Human Life. Its author, Rowland E. Prothero, says:

> No fragment of the glorious temples at Jerusalem; but the imperishable hymns of the Jewish worship rule the hearts of men with more than their pristine power, and still continue to inspire and elevate the conduct and devotions of successive generations of mankind. Fathers of the early Church, like Origen, Athanasius and Jerome, Basil, Ambrose and Augustine; apostles of British Christianity, such as Columba, Cuthbert, Wilfrid, Dunstan, and Bede; mediæval saints, like Bernard, Francis of Assisi, or Thomas of Villanova; statesmen, like Ximenes, Burghley, and Gladstone—have testified to the universal truth and beauty of the Psalms. With a psalm upon their lips died Wiclif, Huss and Jerome of Prague, Luther and Melanchthon. Philosophers, such as Bacon and Locke and Hamilton; men of science, like Humboldt and Romanes; among missionaries, Xavier, Martyn, Duff, Livingstone, Mackay, and Hannington; explorers, like Columbus; scholars, like Casaubon and Salmasius; earthly potentates, like Charlemagne, Vladimir, Monomachus, Hildebrand, Louis IX, Henry V, Catherine de Medici, Charles V, Henry of Navarre, and Mary Queen of Scots—have found in the Psalms their inspiration in life, their strength in peril, or their support in death.

Oliver Cromwell's mind was fairly saturated with the Psalms, and on many a hard fought field his soldiers joined in singing the swelling stanzas of some martial exhortation or of some

triumphant pæan from the Hebrew Psalter. The armies of more than one great commander have been heartened by the stirring measures of the Psalms, and from the same source, reformers, confessors, martyrs and heroes of liberty have derived inspiration and courage for their tasks and trials.

The influence of the Psalms in literature has been monumental. Sir Philip Sidney, Lord Bacon, Robert Burns, William Cowper, John Milton, George Herbert, John Keble, Joseph Addison, Charles Wesley, and Isaac Watts are a few among the many who have rendered the Psalms into English verse; and still more imposing is the list of poets and men of letters in various lands who have yielded to the spell of these deathless lyrics.

We cannot attempt even a superficial examination of all the poetic literature of the Bible, but no one who hopes to obtain a fair appreciation of its variety and extent should fail to apply his literary judgment to such masterpieces as the Proverbs, which Matthew Arnold calls "a delicious book," the Song of Solomon "a whole collection of fine specimens of wedding songs," and the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

The dramatic poem which bears the name of Job, its central figure, is best described by means of the tributes paid to it by two dis-

tinguished men of letters. Thomas Carlyle says:

> I call the Book of Job, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with a pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble book; all men's book. It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem —man's destiny and God's way with him here in this earth. And all in such free, flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity, in its epic melody and repose of reconcilement. . . . Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind; so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.

The judgment of James Anthony Froude is of the same nature:

> An extraordinary book, a book of which it is to say little to call it unequaled of its kind, and which will one day, perhaps, when it is allowed to stand on its own merits, be seen towering up alone, far away above all the poetry of the world.

Only repeated and continuous reading of Job will enable the mind to discover the justification for this superlative praise, nor can the sublime moralities of the poem be understood adequately by any man till he has reached middle life, and been confronted with the problems which form the substance of its profound inquiries. Yet it needs but an elemen-

tary literary culture to discern the rhetorical grandeur of such passages as that which portrays Job's yearning to find God, in chapter 23; or that which describes the benefits of chastisements, in chapter 5; or that which delineates the creation and constitution of the earth, in chapter 38; or that which pictures the war-horse, in chapter 39; or that which describes leviathan, in chapter 41.

There is in this book such a blending of epic, lyric, and dramatic elements, and such an intermingling of ethical, moral, and social questions, as cannot be found in the masterpieces of any other literature. When this wondrous work is compared with Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and Goethe, its preeminence is at once apparent.

When we turn to the New Testament for illustrations of biblical poetry, we are met chiefly by quotations from the Old Testament, both in the narrative portions of the Gospels and in the discourses of Jesus, whose mind was filled with a knowledge of the ancient writings of his people. The same is true of the Acts of the Apostles and of the speeches of Peter and Paul. The Epistles contain frequent citations from the prophetical books and the Psalms. Of original poetry we have but few examples in the New Testament, but these are of the

highest quality. In the Gospel of Luke appear what have been called the first Christian hymns. In addition to the Ave Maria of the Roman Church, the annunciation to Mary (1. 28-33), and the Gloria in Excelsis of all Christendom, the angelic salutation which heralded the advent of Jesus (2. 14), we have the Benedictus, or song of Zacharias (1. 68-79); the Magnificat, or the song of the Virgin Mary (1. 46-55), and the Nunc Dimittis, or the song of Simeon (2. 29-32). Allusions to the old writings or direct quotations from them occur in these songs. They are especially plentiful in the Magnificat; but of this song it has been well said that "it surpasses the Old Testament in spiritual elevation, and the unity of feeling that pervades it makes it an original composition." In the broader significance of poetry, which subordinates form to spirit or altogether disregards mechanical construction, Jesus may be classed among the poets, and surely Paul's Ode to Love in 1 Cor. 13, and much of his discussion of the resurrection in the fifteenth chapter of the same epistle must be regarded as poetry in essence, though not in form.

II

It is an easy and natural transition from the poetry to the oratory of the Bible. There is

an obvious kinship between these two forms of expression. Many of the orations in the Old Testament are not only poetical in spirit, but they are phrased in language which can be rightly estimated only by using the same canons of literary judgment which are applied to poetry. Yet the essential motive of oratory is broadly distinguished from that of most poetry. Definitions of oratory, as framed by men who were masters of public discourse, will both aid us in determining the end which oratory seeks, and enable us to perceive the grounds on which the oratory of the Bible is assigned so lofty a place.

"An orator," said Cicero, "is one who can use words agreeable to hear and thoughts adapted to prove." Aristotle described oratory as "the power of saying on every subject what can be found to persuade." Macaulay declared, "The object of oratory alone is not truth, but persuasion." Emerson affirmed, "The end of eloquence is—is it not? to alter in a pair of hours, perhaps in a half hour's discourse, the convictions and habits of years." Fénelon defines it more elaborately thus:

> The whole art of oratory may be reduced to proving, painting and raising the passions. Now all those pretty sparkling, quaint thoughts that do not tend to one of these ends are only witty conceits. The whole art of eloquence consists in enforcing the clearest proofs of any truth with such powerful motives as may affect

the hearers, and employ their passions to just and worthy ends; to raise their indignation at ingratitude, their horror against cruelty, their compassion for the miserable, their love of virtue, and to direct every other passion to its proper objects.

According to these definitions, which we may accept as expert testimony on the subject, oratory is not boisterous declamation, or perfervid rhetoric, or bombastic fury of voice or manner, but reasonableness, put forward in an impressive fashion. Poetic beauty may characterize it, deep feeling will undoubtedly pervade it, but whatever springs of emotion are touched, the motive will be persuasion, proof, conviction.

Within these terms we shall find oratory in abundance in the literature of the Bible. Though it will be impracticable to make citations such as were gathered from the poets, for reason that will be apparent to the judicious, yet a sufficient indication of oratorical passages in the Bible may be given. It has been said that no collection of speeches in secular literature has the interest which attaches to the orations of Moses because of their setting, as displayed in the book of Deuteronomy. These will be read with much relish if their historical perspective is clearly before our minds. One of the finest specimens of eloquence in any language is Judah's plea

before Joseph (Gen. 44. 18-34), and no person of feeling can read it without being deeply moved. Joshua's exhortation to Israel (Josh. 23. 3-16) at the close of his public career is an exalted discourse which produced a profound impression, and was attended by results that place it well within the range of the definitions of oratory already quoted. Ezra's sermon (Neh. 8) must be reckoned as a noble piece of homiletical exposition, though but little of his actual speech is recorded.

It is among the prophets, however, that we must look for the most copious illustrations of the oratory which has been preserved in the Old Testament. It is customary for many to think of these seers as writers rather than as speakers. In truth, however, their deliverances were not, in most instances, originally written, but were speeches subsequently set down in form for consultation and reference; just as the speeches of Webster and other American statesmen were first given in extemporaneous form, and afterward prepared for publication; or as many of the sermons of Wesley were arranged with strict attention to logical propriety and were sustained by extensive notes, but were not reduced to writing until they were needed for the press.

Many of the orations of the prophets were distinctly poetic both in form and substance.

Indeed, it would be quite impossible to assign to them their true value as literature without keeping this fact in mind. What Dr. Arthur S. Peake says about the Bible in general is particularly apposite for the prophetical writings: "There are many passages of Scripture whose spell over us would be completely broken were they to be so written that, while the ideas remained the same, the expression was changed into pedestrian prose." Illustrations of this fact will occur to everyone familiar with the Old Testament.

Some of the prophets were not educated in the formal sense. Amos was a herdsman. A modern critic has suggested that the reason Jeremiah dictated his prophecy to Baruch was that he could not write. The ignominy of such a disability is diminished in the mind of this author by recalling that "Wolfram von Eschenbach, the great German poet of the middle ages, could neither read nor write; yet he produced works of great length, and, in accordance with the practice of the time, he no doubt recited them on different occasions." Isaiah flourished in the court of Hezekiah, and represents an entirely different type of prophet. Each of the great seers whose addresses have been preserved possessed characteristics which distinguish him from the others. The earliest of them, as well as some of the later

ones, have given us what has been called the national poetry of their times, charged as it is with the public and community issues of the several periods in which it was produced.

It must not be forgotten that the element of prediction entered but subordinately into their work. They were seers who spoke in behalf of Jehovah, agitators who attempted to rouse the nation to a consciousness of the need for reform. They undertook to interpret to the people the latter's civic, national, and religious duties. They felt it to be their first obligation to make clear these responsibilities and the account which must be rendered to God for their proper discharge. Dean Stanley, in his History of the Jewish Church, has given parallel instances of the exercise of the prophetic office in later history. He says:

> When Ambrose closed the doors of the church of Milan against the blood-stained hands of the devout Theodosius, he acted in the spirit of a prophet. When Ken, in spite of his doctrine of the divine right of kings, rebuked Charles II on his deathbed for his long unrepented vices, those who stood by were justly reminded of the ancient prophets. When Savonarola, at Florence, threw the energy of his religious zeal into burning indignation against the sins of the city, high and low, his sermons read more like Hebrew prophecies than modern homilies.

To these we may add, as equally pertinent illustrations, the work of Whitefield and the Wesleys, of Asbury and Edwards, of many reli-

gious and social reformers of modern times, who in a sense are as much to be designated prophets as were Amos and Malachi.

In recent years the political functions of the biblical prophets have come to be better understood than in former times. The matter has been put felicitously by Dr. Hodges, as quoted by Dr. Washington Gladden:

> The Jewish Church was the Jewish nation. The prophets were patriot orators, who preached politics with vehemence, and entered might and main into public life. It is impossible to think of Isaiah as a quiet parish priest, living in the center of a narrow circle, letting the great world outside go on uninterrupted in its own mistaken way. In New York, in Boston, Isaiah would have been the heart and soul of a great, outspoken, radical independent, righteous newspaper. Amos and Hosea would have put themselves in peril of the police by inflammatory speeches on the street corners and in the parks. All these men were interested in public questions profoundly and supremely. . . . There was no difference [to them] between a parliament and a prayer meeting. Any political question was also a religious question.

Space is denied us for citations from the prophetic orators, but examples abound. The reader who has a susceptibility for eloquence, and whose imagination is vivid enough to enable him to realize the situations out of which these messages were uttered, will find no difficulty in selecting for himself speech after speech of unusual oratorical and dramatic power from the prophetical writings.

Attention is herewith directed to the prophecy of Isaiah, chapters 1. 2-20; 3. 9-26; 35; 55 and 60, as containing noble illustrations of oratory. They also exhibit the strong poetic quality of this orator-prophet, and go far to explain the words of Matthew Arnold: "I rate the value of the operation of poetry and literature upon men's minds extremely high; and from no poetry and literature, not even from our own Shakespeare and Milton, great as they are, and our own as they are, have I for my own part received so much delight and stimulus as from Homer and Isaiah." Other prophets will make a like impression on other minds, and a thorough acquaintance with their literature will dispose us to express with respect to many of them the sentiment uttered by Ruskin with regard to one of them: "I should have liked excessively to have known Habakkuk."

When we enter the domain of the New Testament we are obviously where oratory plays a most conspicuous part. It is undeniable that John the Baptist was a man of remarkable oratorical gifts. The mere reading of Matt. 3. 7-12, compared with Luke 3. 3-17, will indicate this, and the immense influence he exerted over the crowds which were drawn to him from every part of Palestine will confirm the impression. The question is some-

times mooted whether Jesus can be with propriety denominated an orator. So universal were his intellectual resources, as revealed in his parables and other discourses, that, though not a fragment of writing from his hand exists, one sees that there is no form of literature in which he might not have excelled. Reference has already been made to the poetic characteristics of his speech, and as a maker of stories he has remained unsurpassed to this day. He surely possessed the prime requisites for an orator. He had a flawless physical constitution; the lack of it would have been used against him by his enemies and would have made it impossible for him to endure the strain and exposure of his public ministry. He must have had a magnificent voice, or he could not have made himself heard by the vast throngs which gathered on the hillsides to listen to his words. He had the oratorical temperament, and could run the whole gamut of emotional expression, from the mildest pathos to the most withering sarcasm. With the glance of his eye he could quell the hostile mob, or send the recreant disciple away weeping bitterly. In rhetorical purity and splendor he was matchless. His parables are marvels of simplicity and directness; their literary beauty has never been equaled. While the Sermon on the Mount is didactic, epigrammatic, pictorial,

it embodies the spirit of that eloquence, the purpose of which is to persuade or convince, and the peroration, as recorded in Matt. 7. 21-27, is truly sublime. In Christ's indictment of the Scribes and Pharisees, preserved in the twenty-third chapter of the same Gospel, we have an equally impressive example of his power of invective.

Of apostolic oratory we have numerous and striking illustrations. A perusal of the Pauline epistles will disclose how winged were the words of the Apostle to the Gentiles. From these writings we are able to get a conception of what Paul would do in public speech. As his epistles were, with few exceptions, intended to be read to the churches, we may discern the reason for their resemblance to addresses, though in some instances, as in the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle to the Colossians, we have discourses more seriously reasoned than would be natural to public speech.

Readers of the Acts of the Apostles will recall more than one address of Peter's which exhibits the fervor and persuasiveness of genuine oratory. In Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrim we have an oratorical example of high significance; while Paul's addresses on Mars' Hill (Acts 17), to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20), on the staircase at Jerusalem (Acts 22), before Felix (Acts 24), and before

Agrippa (Acts 26), reveal the forensic ability which he possessed.

From this hurried survey of the oratorical elements in the literature of the Bible we are not surprised at the influence wrought by it upon the oratory of those men in public life who have been wise enough to pore over its contents. Every student of literature is aware that Lincoln's celebrated Gettysburg speech is full of biblical ideas and phraseology, as were most of his public addresses and state papers. Both Edmund Burke and John Bright enriched their speeches in Parliament and on the hustings by many extracts from the Scriptures. Said Daniel Webster, "If there is anything in my style or thoughts to be commended, the credit is due to my kind parents for instilling into my mind an early love of the Scriptures." When Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot-orator, was asked how he came to know and speak the English language so well, he replied, "By studying the English Bible." The great power of Chrysostom's sermons lay not merely in his extraordinary rhetorical ability, but also and mainly in his thorough acquaintance with the Bible, of which he made abundant use. The biographer of Rufus Choate says of him:

> You can hardly find speech, argument, or lecture of his, from first to last, that is not sprinkled and studded

with biblical ideas and pictures, and biblical words and phrases. To him the book of Job was a sublime poem. He knew the Psalms by heart, and dearly loved the prophets, and above all Isaiah, upon whose gorgeous imagery he made copious drafts. He pondered every word, read with most subtle keenness, and applied with happiest effect.

The man who wishes to perfect himself in the art of public speech, as respects both the matter and manner of effective discourse, must consult not merely those classic examples of Greece and Rome which are so frequently held up for his emulation, but also those rugged orators whose sentences resound through the Scriptures, and especially the utterances of Him who spoke as "never man spake."

CHAPTER III

The Fiction and Humor of the Bible

Heinrich Heine said, "The Bible is the drama of the human race." This is a truer description than many realize who quote it with approval. If they concede its correctness they ought to acknowledge the truth of its implications, and expect the Bible to reflect all the moods of mankind. This they virtually deny. Their reverence for the sublime *motif* of redemption which pervades the Bible has led them to obscure the human element which exists in its various documents. They forget that it is the ancient literature of a great people, a manifold expression of their life, the ripest intellectual fruitage of a race with a genius for religion; and that no tenable theory of its divine inspiration can ignore the historical process by which it was produced.

It has been observed more than once, and expressed in various terms, that while the ideal of the Greeks was knowledge, and that of the Romans was social order, the ideal of the Hebrews was religion. The Bible is the record of the religious and national development of the Hebrew people. In a theocracy,

such as that out of which Jewish nationality was evolved, religious experience and racial history are inseparable. When a people living under such conditions begin to write, it is natural that what they produce should have a religious cast. In accord with this principle some of the books of the Bible have an exclusively religious aim, which the dullest mind cannot ignore. Others are dominated by religious sentiments, though they are not written primarily with a religious purpose. Still others, on a close scrutiny, fail to disclose more than moral or religious implications. They were not devised as religious literature. Religion is simply the atmosphere in which they were composed. The Song of Solomon and the book of Esther may be assigned to this last class. To such an extent has the feeling prevailed that only those books should be regarded sacred which are emphatically religious that great hesitation has been shown by certain devout scholars to acknowledge the right of any others to a place in the Canon of Scripture. But insistence upon a definite religious teaching in every work for which inspiration is claimed has wrought mischief for religion, and has made it difficult, if not impossible, to form a correct estimate of the Bible. What Phillips Brooks said about the second collection of books in the Bible applies to the entire

volume: "The New Testament is a biography. Make it a mere book of dogmas, and its vitality is gone. Make it a book of laws, and it grows hard and untimely. Make it a biography, and it is a true book of life. Make it the history of Jesus of Nazareth, and the whole world holds it in its heart forever." If in the same spirit we persist in the opinion that the Old Testament is to be read from beginning to end with a strictly theological interpretation always in mind, we shall inevitably lose many of the most wholesome virtues which are inherent in its literature. But if we constantly remind ourselves of the actual character of this literature, and remember how it was produced, we shall be prepared for an almost unlimited variety of art forms, and shall not be surprised to find, in addition to history, adventure, biography, poetry and oratory, illustrations of romance, the drama, fiction and humor. Indeed, on the supposition that the ancient Hebrews were a normal people, whose intellectual life developed naturally, we should be puzzled if we did not discover such types in their literature.

I

The reluctance of devout admirers of the Bible to admit that fiction is displayed within

its pages is probably due in large part to their inability to distinguish between the truth which is indissoluble from fact and the truth which is independent of fact, which in a narrative, for example, is defiant of historicity. They forget that Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress may be true as an exposition of the spiritual conflicts which are incident to a finally triumphant Christian life, while at the same time it is wholly untrue as a description of the actual occurrences in the career of a real individual and of those other persons who are represented as having been in association with him. Gradually the parables of Jesus have come to be recognized by the majority of Bible readers as fiction of the noblest species, their strength lying in the obvious possibility of the events narrated, and in their similarity to the commonly observed happenings of the world. When it is once realized that Jesus was a most skillful inventor of stories, the substance of which was plucked out of the experiences of mankind, but the shaping of which was due to the matchless genius of his mind, it is easy to accommodate one's thought to the affirmation that various other portions of the Bible can only satisfactorily be explained as fiction.

A simple and rudimentary form of fictitious writing is the fable. This literary contrivance is sharply differentiated from other forms of

fiction by the fact that it employs inanimate nature, and more frequently the lower animals of creation for its *dramatis personæ*. A story is made the vehicle of truth to be imparted, but is always an impossible story. The motive is usually the inculcation of what has been termed "prudential morality." Industry, frugality, foresight, caution, common sense, and other sterling virtues of a well-regulated life are illustrated, but no such strict regard for the semblance of fact is shown as one expects in the higher forms of fiction. So far as the records indicate neither Jesus nor his apostles ever used the fable, but we have several examples of it in the Old Testament, the most impressive being that which Jotham spoke to the men of Shechem from the top of Mount Gerizim (Judg. 9. 8-15). It reads as follows:

The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? And the trees said unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my new wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and take refuge in

my shade; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

There is a briefer fable in 2 Kings 14. 9, written by King Jehoash to Amaziah, king of Judah, in these words:

The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle.

To one who has been reared in the belief that the only approach to fiction in the Bible is the parable it is naturally somewhat disconcerting to be told that the myth has any place in its literature. Yet, if we had not been taught an artificial view of the Scriptures, we could not hesitate to call mythical this passage from the Epistle of Jude:

But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

One scarcely knows what to call Micaiah's Vision in 1 Kings 22. 19-22. It is not a fable or a parable, and it is surely not history.

I saw Jehovah sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And Jehovah said, Who shall entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner; and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before Jehovah, and said, I will entice him. And Jehovah said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and will be a

lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt entice him, and shalt prevail also: go forth, and do so.

That is a flight of the imagination, one is forced to admit on moral grounds, if there were no others.

It is on physical grounds that the story of Joshua's command over the sun and the moon, as recorded in Josh. 10. 12-14, is pronounced a myth:

Then spake Joshua to Jehovah in the day when Jehovah delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel,

Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;
And thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.
And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed.
Until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies.

Is not this written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that Jehovah hearkened unto the voice of a man: for Jehovah fought for Israel.

The sublimity of the poetic conception in this passage must not blind us to its irrationality when literally interpreted.

When we pass to the allegory we are on territory that no one will dispute; for the Bible has the finest examples of this figure to be found in literature. The distinction of the allegory is that it carries its own interpretation. In the eightieth psalm we have a pic-

ture of Israel as a vine transplanted from a foreign clime:

Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt;
Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.

Thou preparedst room before it,
And it took deep root, and filled the land.

The mountains were covered with the shadow of it,
And the boughs thereof were like cedars of God.

It sent out its branches unto the sea,
And its shoots unto the River.

Why hast thou broken down its walls,
So that all they that pass by the way do pluck it?

The boar out of the wood doth ravage it,
And the wild beasts of the field feed on it.

Turn again, we beseech thee, O God of hosts:
Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine,

And the stock which thy right hand planted,
And the branch that thou madest strong for thyself.

It is burned with fire, it is cut down:
They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

In the first seven verses of Isa. 5 we have the same figure wrought out more elaborately:

Let me sing for my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he digged it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of

Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry.

In John 15, beginning, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman," the same figure with a different application, and for another purpose, is employed by Jesus.

The vine also appears in a very effective allegory by Ezekiel (17. 3-10) known as the parable of Two Eagles and a Vine, which is referred to in the text as a riddle, which is no sooner delivered, however, than it is explained as showing God's judgment on Jerusalem. Ezekiel is prolific in allegorical pictures. The Lion's Whelps (19. 2-9), and The Boiling Pot (24. 3-5) are worthy of special attention.

In the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes (2-6) there occurs an allegorical characterization of the sorrows and limitations of old age which is peerless in literature. When Tennyson was told that his poem, The Ancient Sage, was like

this, he replied, "I only wish it were; I could never equal that description." The passage is so famous that it need not be cited here, but no reader who is acquainted with the features of advanced age can fail to perceive how faithfully, yet with what poetic beauty, the author of this gem has delineated them. The tribute of H. Rider Haggard to the whole of Ecclesiastes may be appropriately quoted in this connection:

> There is one immortal work that moves me still more —a work that utters all the world's yearning anguish and disillusionment in one sorrow-laden and bitter cry, and whose stately music thrills like the voice of pines heard in the darkness of a midnight gale, and that is the Book of Ecclesiastes.

It seems hardly necessary to remark that the allegory of The Good Shepherd (John 10), in which Jesus so beautifully describes himself and his divine mission, is one of the finest and tenderest pieces of figurative literature in the world.

Nathan's dramatic rebuke of David (2 Sam. 12. 1-7) contains an allegory which will fittingly introduce us to the parables of Jesus, as it is more distinctly parabolic in its construction than the other allegories to which attention has just been directed:

> *There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little*

ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.

A voluminous literature has grown up around the parables of Jesus, many of which have so entered the common fund of the world's knowledge that any allusion to them is immediately understood. The Prodigal Son is recognized as a story which is reproduced in some of its features innumerable times wherever humanity sins and suffers on the earth, but the compassionate items of which are not too frequently illustrated in the conduct of mankind. The parables which set forth the Kingdom of God—and these are many and various—embody principles of social adjustment, in addition to their spiritual teachings, which are only now coming to their legitimate fruition, the Christian world having been slow to perceive their profound philosophy for organized society, or unwilling

to apply them to the problems of the State. The Good Samaritan has captivated humanity, even those who fail to emulate the example of that noble heretic feeling the highest admiration for his virtues. The Rich Fool has his counterpart in modern society, and is constantly stimulating the drift to Socialism, the average man not having yet taken into his mind the aphorism with which the parable is illuminated, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The Pharisee and the Publican have passed into the proverbial speech of the people. The Unrighteous Steward is still a puzzle for all who cannot realize the devotion of Jesus to the paradox as a means of arresting attention, or who cannot see that religion will not prosper as it should without common sense. Dives and Lazarus carry us into the invisible world, and thus take us out of the range of things conformable to our experience or observation. This is one of the parables which form an exception to the terms in which they have previously been described. Only in a profound spiritual sense can possibility or probability be predicated of its scenery. But why continue to specify in respect to riches which are open to all, and which can be readily apprehended by all? They lie before us in the New Testament, a glittering array, unexcelled in the

literature of the world for the glories which distinguish their class.

Before passing to the consideration of works in the Bible more closely resembling the fiction of modern times, and standing apart by themselves as the highest and most extended examples of this species of writing to be found in the sacred Scriptures, it is well to pause for brief mention of two stories which, while they have an historical foundation, are doubtless embellished with fictitious investiture. The first is the book of Ruth, which Goethe called "the loveliest specimen of epic and idyllic poetry which we possess," and of which Humboldt said, "The little book of the gleaner Ruth presents us with a charming and exquisitely simple picture of nature."

The Hebrews were accustomed to put the book of Ruth and the Psalms together, the former being prefixed to the Psalter in order to glorify David, who was sprung from the line of Ruth. That was at a time when a larger number of the psalms were attributed to David than are now ascribed to his authorship. There is an unquestioned historical background to this fascinating romance, but its charm consists in the delicate sweetness which breathes through its whole extent, in its restrained treatment of episodes which an awkward writer would have ruined with vul-

garity, and in its refinement of feeling. Ruth's loving protest to Naomi is immortal:

Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.

Of the book of Esther Professor R. G. Moulton says that it is "saved from being an exciting novel with a double plot only by the accident of its being true." That it is certainly history not all critics are agreed. Though it may have a definite basis of fact, its power as literature consists in the deft way in which its materials are used. Its admission to the Canon of Scripture has been a scandal to some because it nowhere contains the name of God. Luther, who was plagued by the same artificial view of the imperative requirement for pronouncedly theological teachings in any work recognized as biblical that has caused trouble to so many other people, expressed the devout wish that neither Esther nor her book had ever existed. No student of literature will sympathize with this desire. Though the spirit of revenge is exhibited in the book, it is an accompaniment of a not unworthy patriotism, while the doctrine of Divine Providence is as thoroughly illustrated in this story as in any of the events of history which Americans

fondly regard as evidence that the Lord of hosts has been with their people.

In the book of Jonah we finally come upon a work of fiction in which the cunning of the true artist is most felicitously displayed. It has been the object of ridicule by those whose shallow minds seek even the most superficial occasions of pointing the finger of scorn at the Bible, and it has been victimized by those whose unwise zeal for the defense of the Bible has betrayed them into false views of the mode of interpreting it. Ten thousand cheap wits have made merry over these words: "And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God out of the fish's belly . . . And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." While the mockers are making sport of this alleged historical absurdity, they overlook, after the manner of their ilk, the lofty spiritual teachings of the story as developed, and, of course, have no time, and in most instances, no ability, to observe the admirable literary workmanship of this production.

The reasons for regarding the book of Jonah a work of fiction lie much deeper than those physical difficulties on which the scorners

dilate with such humorous zest. The prayer which Jonah is represented as offering within the belly of the fish is a poetical mosaic of phrases from the Psalms, and is evidently the product of patient care such as no man would exercise in the doleful and tragic circumstances which terrified Jonah. Furthermore, it is rather an offering of thanksgiving for deliverance after the event than a prayer for rescue during the depressing experience. It shows the undeniable marks of having been inserted in the narrative for the sake of its own admirable qualities, and not because of any element of naturalness to the situation which it possessed. Moreover, the churlish traits which Jonah is made to exhibit as the story proceeds compel us to hope that the historic person whose name bears the shame of their ugliness was not actually guilty of such ignominious tempers.

After having attempted to flee from his duty, for which he received a merited punishment, and having been delivered from a loathsome predicament, he is commissioned anew to go to Nineveh and declare that in forty days that great and wicked city is to be destroyed. In response to his strident warnings, the inhabitants repent like sensible persons, on hearing the doom that will overtake them if they persist in their iniquities. They had a good

opinion of Jehovah, and believed that if they turned from their sins he would spare them. A great and notable fast was proclaimed, and their expectation concerning Jehovah's clemency was justified. He did not destroy them.

That was a beautiful and characteristic thing in Jehovah, but it did not gratify Jonah. It displeased him exceedingly. He said in effect: "This is the very thing I feared. I knew what sort of person Jehovah is, gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and this is why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I felt certain that Jehovah would be considerate of these Ninevites. It has turned out precisely so. Now let Jehovah take away my life; it is better that I should die; I am a discredited prophet."

Then Jonah sulks outside the city to see what will happen. It is exceedingly hot. A rapidly growing gourd springs up to refresh him with its shade, and he is appropriately grateful. Let the rest of the story be told in the words of the text:

But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well

to be angry, even unto death. And Jehovah said, Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

What a noble rebuke to intolerance and pride and selfishness! How fraught with knowledge of certain ignoble features of human nature is the entire story, and what a sublime conception of God's mercy it conveys! In the face of the nobility of this book, how puerile it is to quibble over the incredibility of the tale, as though it were of larger importance to establish its historicity than to absorb its teachings.

As a piece of literature it justifies the astonishment which Charles Reade the novelist confessed with regard to the amazing effects produced by the biblical writers by means of a few slight touches. He observed that in many instances they made a more lasting impression with their scanty lines than other famous writers have achieved through an abundance of description. One reading of the book of Jonah with this contrast in mind will be sufficient to demonstrate the truthfulness of it in this example at least.

The literary wonders of the book of Job have

already been touched upon. A hasty consideration of it as a dramatic composition must conclude this imperfect outline of the fiction of the Bible. The critics are uncertain of the date which should be affixed to this work, though they insist on assigning it to a much later period than it was formerly supposed to indicate. Still the probability is strong that before Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides had charmed the Greeks with their immortal dramas, and certainly long before their Roman imitators had sought to beguile the Latin peoples with their productions, this great dramatic masterpiece had fallen from the deft fingers of an unknown writer.

Unlike the compositions of the dramatists of the classic world, this work was probably never produced on a stage. Many of the finest dramas in other languages have undergone the same experience. Nor is it indispensable that a work of such a character should have objective representation in order that its values should be appreciated. It has been held that even Shakespeare may be better understood, his marvelous studies of human nature, his deep insight into the spirit of man, his wise philosophy, may be more profitably studied, and his characters be more keenly relished by the thoughtful student of his lines without the interference of the mimic art than by

watching the actor trying to interpret figures, which, as Charles Lamb said about King Lear, are incapable of being intelligently and adequately expressed on the stage.

But dramatic literature affords such an opportunity for vivid recital as cannot be found in any other form. Its movement is quick, its portrayal sharp, and its exhibition of passion intense. The author of Job has availed himself of these advantages, and in the daring colloquies of Jehovah and Satan, in the dialogues of Job and his three companions, and in the final challenge of Jehovah to Job followed by Job's admission of his fault, he has magnificently displayed the art of the dramatist. It is only by permitting this fact to be always existent in one's thought as this work is being read that the truest view of its greatness as literature will be obtained.

II

If the literature of any other people than the Hebrews were discovered to be totally devoid of humor, we should consider it a striking anomaly, and if we were told that this deficiency was the inevitable result of the sanctity attaching to the literature itself, we should be tempted to guess that some redactor, jealous of its reputation, had purged it of what

he conceived to be its incongruities. Nothing of this sort has occurred with the Bible, though so celebrated and gifted a student of the biblical literature as Professor R. G. Moulton ventured to write that, "with the single exception of humorous literature, for which the Hebrew temperament has little fitness, the Bible presents as varied an intellectual food as can be found in any national literature." Carlyle and Renan also held that the Hebrew genius did not possess the gift of humor, a judgment which is refuted by the literary remains of several mediæval and modern Jews, as well as by notable examples in the Talmud, with which many readers are familiar.

Doubtless a particular kind of discernment is essential to the proper evaluation of Hebrew humor. There are temperamental idiosyncrasies with which one must reckon in estimating Jewish letters, as is the case with any other literature in which one was not bred. It is no detraction from the excellence of Aristophanes that some of his jokes require elucidation for the mind unfamiliar with the life of the Greeks, and it would be most uncritical to deny the existence of humor in the Bible simply because it is not recognized by all readers. Indeed, an immense amount of laborious dullness has been expended on the vain effort to formulate a definition of humor

upon which all the wiseacres of the world can agree.

Though humor is, perhaps, the least apparent element in the literature of the Bible, rich veins of it are disclosed to one who has a feeling for its subtleties and some knowledge of the language in which it is expressed and of the racial peculiarities out of which it springs. It would be preposterous to class the Bible with facetious books, and one reason for the failure justly to appraise its humor is our proneness to test it by our modern ideas of the comic. This is a fatal and perfectly irrational blunder. The Hebrew consciousness expressed itself in moral and religious modes. It is this which differentiates its literature, in large part, from that of other races. There is a decided flavor of morality in all genuine humor, but this quality is preeminently displayed in the humor of the Bible.

In defending the propriety of employing humor in religious discourses an English clergyman has very justly said: "If you cannot make men ashamed of doing wrong, you may often make them afraid of being ridiculous. A man who does not feel that he is sinful may often be convinced that he is absurd." The humor of the Bible serves this precise purpose. Its exposures of the folly of a sinful life are all the more effective because they

are in many instances suffused with a humorous quality. Said Hazlitt, "Sir, I am a metaphysician, and nothing makes an impression upon me but abstract ideas." So there are abnormally serious souls who see only theological values in many Scripture narratives which are actually drenched with humor. In order to recognize and relish this humor one must put off the prepossession that the Bible is uniformly solemn, and divest himself of the impression that it is sacrilege to smile at anything in the Scriptures. He will then discover that there is much humor in the stories of the Bible which is not intentional, perhaps, on the part of the writers, but is inseparable from the facts which they record. This may be called the humor inherent in a situation, of which we take a few examples.

It is difficult to understand how any person who is susceptible of humorous ideas can read the history of the Israelites in the Wilderness without being provoked to innocent mirth as he observes the foibles and follies of human nature breaking out in the ludicrous performances of the chosen people. The absurd apology of Aaron for yielding to the equally ridiculous plea of the Israelites for tangible gods (Exod. 32. 22-24) would invariably excite the risibilities of pious readers if they were not awed into solemnity by the reflection that

the narrative is sacred. A similar effect would be produced by the protest of the people against the everlasting monotony of their bill of fare and their lusting for the varied diet of their Egyptian bondage (Num. 11. 4, 5) if the reader were not restrained from realizing the unconscious humor of a ludicrous situation by an artificial conception of the Bible as literature. Many like illustrations in the Old Testament will occur to the mind intent upon finding them, which for the lack of space are not here set down. If we turn to the New Testament, we discover in the childishness of the disciples shades of humor, which were probably unobserved by themselves, but which are obvious enough to others. The ignoble striving of some of the twelve for precedence; the naïve indignation of the rest of the company, who were perhaps just as emulous but less candid; the prating of those fishermen about the sacrifice involved in abandoning their precarious means of a livelihood to follow Jesus, and their solicitude respecting the reward they might expect for such an amazing act of self-denial; the absurd and frantic eagerness of Peter to thrust himself forward in every conversation, whether he understood the matter or not— these are examples of the humor inherent in a situation, which the frank writers of the Gospels have preserved for our instruction,

and which we may wisely read with a recognition of their pathetic humor, though those who recorded them possibly only saw the painful aspects of each incident.

The authors of some of the biblical stories, however, must have been conscious of the humor playing like sunbeams upon their lines. The book of Jonah is pervaded by a subtle humor from which it seems strange that anyone should be obtuse enough to escape. The superficial persons who giggle over the great fish which is represented as first swallowing and then disgorging the recreant prophet, and look no farther, miss the finest elements of humor in the entertaining tale. The meshes of their minds are so coarse that the more delicate items slip through. The preposterous mood of Jonah when he witnesses the repentance of Nineveh can scarcely fail to provoke a smile in us if we are sensitive to its pitiful absurdity. The lugubrious wail of the prophet for death because forsooth he is a discredited foreteller of events is as fine a stroke at pompous self-esteem as one can find in any literature. The pungent humor of the divine parable of the gourd is superb. If we found this story in Turgenieff we should unhesitatingly applaud its cleverness, but discovering it in the Bible we pull a long face and solemnly set about to prove its historicity in order to

protect its sanctity; not realizing that, even if it were shown to be pure fiction, it would still contain some of the richest spiritual teachings in the Scriptures.

Perhaps the most admirable example of folk-lore humor in the Bible, and one of the best in any literature, is the fascinating story of Samson, who is not only portrayed as rioting in practical jokes, but also as being a genuine wit. The disasters which mark his life and the tragedy with which it concludes only serve to bring out more clearly the frolicsome spirit of the man. Bunyan's lines are appropriate:

> Some things are of that nature as to make
> One's fancy chuckle while his heart doth ache.

The pathos of Samson's folly need not deter us from appreciating the humor of his performances. This accretion of tales around the memory of a popular hero is one of the most delicious bits of literary art in the Bible or out of it, and has furnished poets and dramatists with one of the most fruitful themes upon which they could engage their talents. The wit of Samson's riddle, propounded as a wager at his own wedding feast, is obvious to all as soon as the circumstances which originated it are apprehended: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." One can see the sunny-

haired giant gleefully felicitating himself on the impossibility of his competitors ever guessing the secret of the honey in the lion's carcass. The way in which he paid the wager, when it had been lost through the treachery of his bride, illustrates the man's sense of humor: "And he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle." One can imagine him smacking his lips over the grim jest of making his enemies pay his debt of honor. The same spirit is manifest in his slaying of a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass. He evidently takes a sardonic delight in the instrument with which he accomplishes this bloody feat, for he makes a pun about it which it is impossible to reproduce in translation. The word *chamor* which he employs has two meanings: an *ass* and a *heap*. A modern Hebrew scholar, Dr. J. Chotzner, has attempted to bring out the humor of the words describing Samson's exultation over his triumph by the following paraphrase:

> With the jawbone of an ass
> Have I plenteous asses slain;
> Smitten thus it came to pass
> Fell a thousand on the plain.

The drastic quality of Samson's humor appears again in the episode of the three hun-

dred foxes sent scurrying through the cornfields of the Philistines with firebrands tied to their tails. One can easily fancy the reckless jester clapping his hands and prancing about with unholy joy as he beholds the conflagration he has produced. In all his feats of prodigious strength and agility the same humorous feeling is discoverable. His snapping the cords with which his enemies have bound him for delivery into the hands of the Philistines, his carrying off the gates of Gaza and depositing them upon the hill before Hebron—in fact, all of the adventures which signalize his stormy career are shot through with a mischieveous spirit of fun. He evidently luxuriates in his vindictive buffoonery. Nor is this wanton gladness absent from his unfortunate experiences with his Philistine paramour. Each time he fools her about the secret of his strength laughter shakes his ponderous frame and mockery pours from his lips. He revels in the deception of which she is the pouting victim. When finally he surrenders to the blandishments of Delilah, and compasses his own ruin by telling the truth about himself, the first impression upon his mind seems to be scarcely more serious than that the biter has been bitten at last. The joke is on him: "He wist not that the Lord was departed from him." When the fatality of his situation

dawns upon him his inveterate humor still survives. His position is deplorable enough—a blind slave making sport for his hereditary foes. Nevertheless he will extract a morbid gratification from his misfortunes. He will add a climax to all his rude jokes upon his enemies by making them die with him. He pulls down the building in which they are making merry and they perish like cattle. The very grotesqueness of it mitigates the gloom of the catastrophe. Tears and smiles lie close together. The writer of the narrative records with ill-concealed satisfaction: "So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." The fun is fast and furious, though senseless and sinful, to the last. We are to remember that Samson is not the only man who has made a grim jest of death, whose life has been a thoughtless frolic.

We laugh at Samson, though we realize that he made a sorry fool of himself, knowing that the fool is one of the staple articles in the humorist's wares. Without his kind the wit would find his occupation gone. Were all humanity of flawless wisdom it is difficult to see how the contrasts and incongruities which are so vital to humor could be conceived. The Bible deals more severely with fools than does other literature, because its writers are so

deeply concerned with the moral aspects of folly. Yet even they base their diagnosis of the fool on irresponsibility, rashness, and lack of common sense characteristic of their class; a kind of egotistical self-sufficiency and absence of self-restraint, coupled with excessive love of talk and itch for disputation; all of which traits reach their acutest stage in the crowning stupidity of a foolish life—opposition to the will of God.

It is in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament—Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and certain psalms and prophecies—that the fool receives most elaborate attention. The points of humorous criticism to which he is subjected in these writings are so familiar to students of the Bible and so numerous that specific citations do not seem necessary or desirable. Though the author of Ecclesiastes is commonly regarded as sounding a melancholy note, a modern critic has ventured to say of Koheleth: "His humor is mostly of the cheerful order; and far from weeping over the foibles and follies of the human race, he makes merry over them." The contentious woman, the slothful man, the meddler with other people's affairs, the person with itching ears, the trader who brags of a sharp bargain—these and many more are etched in epigrams which provoke mirth in this wisdom literature.

The vanities of worldliness are delineated in a way to excite a smile of philosophic scorn. With these amusing bits of wisdom may be compared the broader rebukes of arrogance and ambition contained in the Fable of Jotham (Judg. 9. 8-15) and the Apologue of Jehoash (2 Kings 14. 9) to which reference has already been made in discussing fiction.

It will be objected by some that those exposures of human folly are so satirical as not properly to be classed with humor, which is gentle and good-natured. It is significant, however, that Thackeray, who is entitled to be called an authority, and whose definition of humor as "a mixture of love and wit" has been widely accepted, in his lectures on the English humorists of the eighteenth century actually begins with Swift, whose temper was vitriolic. It is in this first lecture of the series that he says: "The humorous writer professes to awaken and direct your love, your pity, your kindness—your scorn for untruth, pretension, imposture—your tenderness for the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the unhappy. . . . He takes upon himself to be the week-day preacher, so to speak." It would seem, then, that the gentle humorist may be severe if his motive be benevolent.

The absurdity of idol worship is a favorite subject of caricature with the prophets, admir-

able examples of which are to be found in Isaiah (44) and Jeremiah (10) and elsewhere. Everybody notices the grim humor of Elijah's suggestion to the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel: "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." Job's famous rejoinder to his tormentors is appreciated by the dullest mind: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Other equally humorous bits may be culled from the wonderful book which bears his name. Irony is employed with much effect by the apostle Paul, who is proficient in almost every rhetorical expedient, to whom also a variety of puns may be accredited. There is no resisting this stroke at the self-assurance of some of his followers: "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would God that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. . . . We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised" (1 Cor. 4. 8, 10). Of similar quality is this admonition, "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed of one another" (Gal. 5. 15).

No one questions that Jesus was a master of ironical speech. "Many good works have

I showed you from my Father; for which of these do you stone me?" he asks of his enemies. "When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets," he admonishes his disciples. Though the scholars tell us that there is no proof that the Pharisees ever did such a ludicrous thing, yet the spirit of it endures to our time, and derision is the only effective method of discouraging it. The parable of the unjust steward is a masterpiece of satire. When Jesus compares his generation to children playing feast and funeral, and complaining of one another, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept," his criticism must have brought a smile to the faces of those who heard him.

One cannot speak of the humor of Jesus without the utmost delicacy; he must not in the slightest degree abate his reverence for the Divine Saviour. Nevertheless, it is to be remembered that the Son of Mary was a whole man, and that to ascribe anything abnormal to his human nature is to do violence to any reasonable and scriptural interpretation of his person. When we recall certain traditions of our Lord from extracanonical sources, which have been preserved by orthodox Christians of primitive times with the apparent feel-

ing that these might in part be authentic, we are inclined to wonder whether a certain reserve may not have prevented the evangelists from recording humorous incidents and sayings of his life with which they were familiar. Are not we also affected by an artificial veneration and a fragmentary conception of Christ's nature to such an extent that in some measure we dehumanize him? Ought we not to concede to him a natural sense of humor, quickened by the rarest intelligence and refined by his divine spirituality?

We are not left to mere conjecture regarding the humor of Jesus. His recorded utterances are before us bearing incontrovertible evidence that his genial spirit found expression in kindly pleasantries and humorous suggestions. His colloquy with the Syrophœnician woman (Mark 7) is a good-natured challenge of a heathen's right to ask anything of him until he has attended to all the applications of his own people. The mother's rejoinder is unmistakably witty, and is apparently very much relished by Jesus: "Yes, sir; but the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." Back of the woman's quick intelligence our Lord sees faith in his actual mission, and he instantly responds to it and grants her petition.

Observe his quaint characterizations of

those who carefully cleanse the outside of the cup and platter, forgetting that they drink and feed from the inside of these vessels; of men who carefully strain out a gnat but incontinently swallow a camel. Notice how he hits off the absurdity of trying to serve two masters, of feeding pearls to swine, of putting a light under a bushel, of proffering a stone for bread, or a serpent for a fish, or a scorpion for an egg, of pitting Beelzebub against himself. What a grotesque thing it is for a camel to try to squeeze through the eye of a needle, or for a blind man to attempt to lead another sightless mortal, with the result that both pitch into the gutter. How preposterous it is for a man with a beam in his eye to offer to remove a mote from his brother's eye. Consider the ludicrous plight of the architect who places a house on the shifting sands, of the general who goes to war without thinking it worth while to estimate the possible resources of his enemy, of the man who makes himself the laughing-stock of his town by commencing to build a tower which he has no means to finish. These are delicious bits of our Lord's humor with a high moral purpose.

Think of the quaint shrewdness of admonishing his disciples not to think of the morrow, because that was characteristic of the Gentiles, nor to depend on the worldly policy of

loving only their friends, since that was the habit of the publicans. Remember the pathetic humor of his response when the Pharisees warned him that Herod was on his track: "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected . . . for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Recall his quiet remark, probably accompanied by a tremulous smile, when his disciples brought out two old swords with which to confront the world—"It is enough!" Run through his parables, and observe how rich a vein of humor pervades all of the more important ones. What further need is there of illustrations?—though the number of those not mentioned here is very considerable. It is perfectly evident that Hebrew humor did not fail him of whom "Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write."

CHAPTER IV

The Bible the Most Persistent Force in Literature

Not the least remarkable fact about the Bible is the astonishing way in which it has survived the loss and decay which are incidental or inevitable to literature. The mortality of books is one of their most striking characteristics. It used to be said, and it probably is still true, if indeed the figures are not too restrained, that of every thousand volumes published six hundred and fifty do not see the end of their first year; one hundred and fifty do not last until their third year; and only fifty survive seven years. Of scientific books, it is safe to assert that the majority of them are obsolete in less than ten years. Theological and philosophical works cumber the shelves of second-hand bookstores a few years after they are issued. A comparatively small number of volumes contain the quintessence of all human learning. It is high credit for the Bible that, as the centuries of its history accumulate, its power upon the human imagination increases. When the Revised Version

of the New Testament appeared in 1881, so great was the demand for it that large sums of money were offered for a copy in advance of its advertised date of publication. The streets of New York and other cities were blockaded with express wagons waiting to transport copies of it. Millions of the volumes were sold as fast as they could be delivered, and from the Gospel of Matthew to the Epistle to the Romans the contents of that book were telegraphed from New York to Chicago, in order to get them into the newspapers twenty-four hours before the trains could transport the matter. This is an illustration of American journalistic enterprise, but it is also an impressive demonstration of the deathless interest of humanity in this great library of ancient writing which some people believe to be obsolete.

The antiquity of the Bible increases the significance of its popularity. The probability is that some portions of the Old Testament antedate all other literatures of the world. Certainly the ethnologists and anthropologists are compelled to have recourse to this book when they are considering the origins of humanity. Some portions of the Pentateuch doubtless preceded the earliest of the Vedas by two or three centuries. Moses lived and died a thousand years before Confucius saw

the light. Abraham flourished eight hundred years before Zoroaster. Buddhism did not begin to bloom till Abraham had left the world fifteen centuries. The laws of Moses were given seven hundred years before Lycurgus wrote his, and nearly a thousand years before Solon gave his laws to Athens.

Herodotus has been called the "Father of History," but Moses wrote the story of his campaigns eleven hundred years before Herodotus lived. The lyric poetry of the Hebrews sprang into being a thousand years before Horace wrote his Odes. Deborah sang her triumphant song five hundred years before burning Sappho stirred the thought of man. Thus part by part the literature of the Bible surpasses in antiquity that of any volume in existence. It has outlived its most ambitious competitors. Men used to talk about banishing the Bible from the literature of the world —a futile boast, since the Bible has imbedded itself in manifold forms of literature, which have taken their inspiration from it. We are told that Lord Hailes of Scotland searched the writings of the Christian fathers up to the end of the third century, and actually found the whole of the New Testament, with the exception of less than a dozen verses, scattered through their extant writing. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

but the word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Pet. 1. 24, 25).

I

The Bible has also withstood the perils of translation, and these are more numerous and embarrassing than those would fancy who have not made an examination of the case. Lord Bacon tells us somewhere that when Queen Elizabeth, just before her coronation, it being customary to release prisoners at the inauguration of a sovereign, went to the Royal Chapel, one of her courtiers, who was well known to her, presented her with a petition and, before a number of court favorites, besought her with a loud voice that there were four or five prisoners unjustly detained in prison. It was inquired who they were, when the petitioner replied that they were the four evangelists and the apostle Paul, who had long been shut up in an unknown tongue, as it were, in prison, so that they could not converse with the common people. The queen answered very gravely that it was first best to inquire of them whether they desired to be set at liberty or not. Her Majesty probably had little doubt as to the answer which would be returned from an examination of these extraordinary captives. At any rate we know that the prisoners were speedily released, and in an authorized ver-

sion of the Scriptures known as "The Bishops' Bible," they were permitted to converse with the common people who were not able to visit them in prison. Now the real story of the unbinding of the writers of the Bible from chains of ancient and little used languages began much earlier than this and reads like a romance. Moreover, it has continued down to our own day, and is not finished yet, nor will the business of translation be completed till the Bible is made available to every kindred and tribe and tongue on the face of the whole earth.

Now there are some writers imprisoned in foreign tongues whom it would be unwise to lead out of prison. Their characters are not sufficiently pure to make their mingling with society a benefit to mankind. Max Müller, the famous student of philology and comparative religions, when editing and publishing a collection of the Sacred Books of the East, was constrained to suppress some parts of them as being too foul and immoral for publication. One of these productions is so utterly vicious that it was declared by the highest legal authority of Bombay to be a criminal offense to translate it into any living language of India. This is a very significant fact, the meaning of which ought not to be lost on those persons who profess to believe that the reli-

gious systems of the Orient are sufficient for the inhabitants of those Eastern countries.

But the Bible is a book which can be translated into the speech of any people without jeopardizing their morals. There are overnice persons in the modern church who would like an expurgated edition of the Scriptures for family use, and we have had attempts at recomposition and modernization of the Bible from early days down to the work of Dr. James Moffatt called "A New Translation of the New Testament," a work which in some parts is almost a vulgarization of the Scriptures, but which in general is an illuminating aid to their interpretation. Long ago a certain Dr. Geddes made a translation of the Scriptures with a similar purpose. He translated the word "Passover" as "Skipover," and introduced constables among the ancient Israelites. A man named Sebastian Castillon produced among the Spaniards a classical version of the Bible, into which he introduced phrases and whole sentences from profane writers, but, as the elder Disraeli, from whom we take these examples, says: "Of the noble simplicity of the Scripture he seems not to have had the remotest conception." A French writer named Berruyer wrote a paraphrase of the Scriptures after the style of the fashionable novel, telling the stories of David and Joseph, for example,

in the elaborate embellishments of a modern society fiction; and so great a man as Archbishop Tillotson prepared what was known as a Family Bible, from which had been excised whatever might be offensive to domestic taste. But however wise it may be to ignore certain unimportant sections of the Old Testament when prescribing what portions of the Bible should be read by the young and immature, it is true as a general statement that the Bible contains nothing unwholesome, and that in translating it no peril to the morals of mankind is incurred. On the other hand, the whole intention and accomplishment of the Bible is to denounce and destroy evil.

But there are perils in translating the Bible which subject it to the severest tests. In whole or in part it has been translated into more than five hundred dialects and languages. It would be natural to suppose that in some of these it would lose its power, since to suit itself to many civilizations and conditions it must have marvelous adaptability; and to speak through such different vocabularies it must transcend in its thought the words employed to translate it. It is a dangerous expedient to translate a book simply because in its native tongue it is impressive. When rendered into another language it may lose its distinctive charm. This is indisputably the case with the Sacred Books

of the East. They have been translated into idiomatically faultless English; yet they repose in undisturbed silence on the shelves of the great libraries like mummies in a museum, only observed now and then by the learned antiquary or the curious searcher after Oriental treasure. The Koran is a good illustration of all of them. Arabic scholars declare that in the original it has a certain rhetorical rhythm which charms the Arab ear and holds the attention of the reader; but when the thoughts are translated into another language they become vapid, insipid, and inane. John Ruskin says: "I have read three or four pages of the translation of the Koran and never want to read more." Carlyle calls it "insufferably stupid." Gibbon says: "Mahomet's loftiest strains must yield to the sublime simplicity of the book of Job, composed in a remote age and in the same country." Yet it is said we have a good English translation. But, according to a recent writer, there are not twenty men living who have read the Koran in English, though it could be done in a dozen hours. In its translated form it appeals to no one. But this peril the Bible has endured and the number of its students is constantly increasing.

Still there are great difficulties in translating it. With some portions exact rendering is literally impossible. Lucretius, the Latin

poet, who has given us a fine exposition in verse of the Epicurean philosophy, complains in the beginning of his famous poem of the difficulty of his task because of the poverty of the Latin language, and the novelty of his theme. He was compelled to invent a scientific terminology in order to express the ideas of the philosophy he was enunciating. Paul and other New Testament writers experienced a similar difficulty in the use of classic Greek, so that it was necessary for them to infuse new meanings into old words, and in some instances practically to manufacture words and phrases adequately to express the sublime ideas of the gospel of Christ. In the same manner all modern translations of the Christian Scriptures into heathen tongues have been embarrassed. Examples of this may be found in every tongue. Moravian missionaries in New Guinea, for example, could do no better with the Lord's Prayer than to render the first sentence, "Our Father, thou sittest in heaven," and in place of "Thy kingdom come" were forced to substitute, "Come Thou Chieftain Great." In Alaska, where there are no sheep nor shepherds, the missionary could find no better rendering of the first sentence of the twenty-third psalm than to say, "The Lord is a first class mountain hunter." In India and elsewhere it has been found necessary to manu-

facture words by a kind of transliteration, as, for example, the word "kanshans" for "conscience," and the word "simpatiaz" for "sympathize." Thus the Bible is not inarticulate, though it is compelled to speak through such infirm mediums. It utters itself even through broken and fragmentary vocabularies, and it becomes articulate in such a fashion as to be understood because its thoughts find response in the intuitions of the human mind everywhere and among all kindreds, peoples, and tongues. When you have translated the books of the East into the English tongue you have not brought them any nearer to the English mind; but when you translate the Bible into the languages of the Orient, or the restricted vocabularies of the Southern lands, or the narrow tongues of the North, you bring these people a volume which they understand at once. It speaks to them of what God has already spoken to their consciences. To quote a modern writer, "It has taken a position outside the peculiarities of any race or clime. It is not the book of an empire or of an era or of a civilization or mode of culture. It is a book which has proved itself contemporaneous with all time, coextensive with all space, and coexistent with all culture, and the only explanation of the fact that it has been translated without the loss of anything vital is that

it consists of God's thoughts in men's words." At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was said, "There are over sixty different languages in the world, and it is absolutely impossible for the Bible to find expression in all of them." Since then we have learned that there are many times as many languages as was once supposed, and that the Bible can speak through all of them without stammering.

It has also withstood the furious assaults of its avowed enemies. These have divided themselves into various classes for different points of attack, even as an army falls into brigades for a like purpose. One division of the foe has sought the destruction of the Bible by acts of violence on the book itself, of which class Jehoiakim, the King of Judah, who attempted to destroy a part of prophecy by cutting it with a knife and burning it on the hearth, is an illustration. Another is Antiochus IV, who one hundred years before Christ gathered all the Scriptures he could find and obliterated them with dastardly vandalism. Still another is Diocletian, the emperor, who in 312 A. D. issued an edict for the annihilation of the Scriptures; and still others are the Roman Catholic authorities, who times without number down to the present day have heaped the sacred books into blazing piles in the vain effort to suppress their influence.

Failing to drive the Bible itself into oblivion, the enemies of truth have sought to silence the champions of the Bible who have preached its doctrines and disseminated its teaching. The book is most powerful when it has a man of religious sincerity back of it. Hence the Waldenses and the Albigenses must be hunted to the death. John Huss must be burned at the stake and his ashes scattered on Lake Constance. Jerome Savonarola must be murdered in the same fashion in the Florentine marketplace. William Tyndale must be brutally sacrificed at Smithfield, England. And hosts of Bible readers and colporteurs down to this hour must be mobbed, imprisoned, stoned, and killed in the futile attempt to destroy these immortal books, for despite the burning of millions of copies and hundreds of translators and disseminators of the Scriptures, the irrepressible volume has leaped on to wider popularity than is known to any other work of genius.

Since it could not be exterminated, its enemies have sought to invalidate its influence by impugning its character, disputing its authenticity, and disproving its veracity. Yet the very stones have cried out to proclaim its trustworthiness. The spade of the excavator has turned up evidences of its reliability in the ruins of buried cities. Tablets, columns,

monuments, and every species of inscribed stone have repeatedly confirmed its records.

Failing to destroy the historical character of the Bible, its enemies have sought to undermine the influence it has gained through the religious system founded upon it. Wicked men, whose lives it condemns, have consistently assaulted it, not because they found hard intellectual difficulties in accepting it, but because its sentences smote them fiercely in the face and they must fight it or surrender. False religionists have consistently opposed it because it asserts its supremacy over the consciences of men and will brook no rivals. Infidels have attacked it because it rebukes them and their lives. Voltaire condemned it and said that before the beginning of the nineteenth century Christianity would have vanished, but Voltaire's prediction is ingloriously annulled, and Voltaire's scholarship, which in the Bible was not equal to that of the average boy, is discredited and his life stands to explain his antagonism to it. Thomas Paine condemned it, but his blunders were so great that he found it necessary to apologize for them by saying that when he wrote one of his treatises he had no copy of the New Testament with him; and he died an outcast drunkard, leaving behind him a record which showed why he was hostile to the Bible. When you learn

what kind of men many of the enemies of Christianity have been you instantly know the reason of their hostility. You also realize to some extent why their assaults have been so puerile and futile. No bad man can prevail against a good book.

The Bible has also withstood the abuse to which it has been subjected by its avowed friends, and this has been as severe a test of permanency as the ability to survive the hostility of its open foes. The champions of every great reform have been constrained to pray that God would deliver them from their friends, and the defenders of the Bible might ask with equal reverence that God would save the precious volume from the ravages of its friends. No book has ever suffered such abuse from conscientious persons. Puzzled by sentences in the Holy Scripture which seemed repellent to morality or contradictory to reason, men who were anxious for the reputation of the Bible have felt that the doctrine of divine inspiration could be supported only by attributing to the Scriptures an allegorical or inner meaning. Philo, the Jew, thus interpreted the Holy Scriptures. Origen, one of the noblest of the Christian fathers, followed the same practice. The venerable Bede, who gave to the world a truly wonderful translation of the New Testament, indulged in similar

nonsense. Swedenborg, in modern times, carried the method to the wildest extremes. The total effect of these misguided efforts has been to discredit the sacred Scriptures in the eyes of cool-headed and thoughtful people and to make the Bible an occasion of ridicule. No one has been more successful in thus injuring the repute of the Scriptures than Mrs. Eddy, with her grotesque paraphrases and absurd interpretations of such portions of Scripture as she found useful for her purpose.

Again the friends of the Bible have made it ridiculous by using it to refute scientific theories which subsequently were triumphantly established. The writers of the Bible never intended to be scientists. It is wonderful how God has preserved them from the folly of placing themselves in antagonism to the investigations of the ages following their time. It is as important to be kept from being a fool as to be inspired with the power to be brilliant. Some well-meaning, but wrong-headed individuals have always insisted on making the Bible an authority in physical science. Thus, on the basis of the Scriptures, Lactantius denied that the world is round; Ambrose stated that the sky is a solid vault; Augustine denied the antipodes; Spanish priests argued the impossibility of Columbus's scheme; Calvin protested against the helio-

centric system; Wesley disputed the Copernican system; Kepler was opposed by Calvin; Roger Bacon, Galileo, Buffon, Darwin, and numerous others were remorselessly assailed by the Church. Professor Tyrrell of Dublin University declares: "I have myself seen an old edition of the 'Principia' by a learned Abbé who took care to explain in his preface that, though the conclusions of Newton constituted a good discipline for the exercise of the mental faculties, and, therefore, might be studied with profit, yet they must not be regarded as true, inasmuch as a bull of the Holy Father had spoken of the sun as revolving around the earth." In much the same fashion Protestants, who substituted the Bible for the Pope, have condemned the teachings of science on the ground that the Scriptures contradicted them.

Reputed friends of the Bible have made it a scandal to the good and the pure by appealing to it for authority for many species of wickedness, especially for the justification of religious persecution, proving the truth spoken by one of Shakespeare's characters:

> In religion,
> What damned error, but some sober brow
> Will bless it, and approve it with a text,
> Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?

Romanists and Protestants alike have been

guilty of this folly. Witchcraft was punished by cruelties immeasurable on the basis of Scripture texts. Crimes have been justified, polygamy defended, slavery supported by the same process. As some one has truthfully said, "Men betray the Bible with a kiss." The words of Burns are pertinent:

> E'en ministers, they have been kenn'd
> In holy rapture
> A rousing whid at times to vend,
> And nail't wi' Scripture.

Not the least of the strains placed upon the Bible it has suffered from zealous theologians, who have violently twisted its lines to conform to their theories and support their doctrines. "Men have first formed a creed, and then gone to the Bible to seek its confirmation," says one, "instead of going to God's Word simply to ascertain what God has said, and what the mind of the Spirit is."

The superstitious uses to which the Bible has been subjected constitute a source of injury to it which has been operative from a very distant time until the present hour. In a recent book on The Influence of the Bible on Civilization, Professor Ernst von Dobschütz says concerning this abuse in an earlier day:

> There was the gospel, representative of Jesus himself in his heavenly power; superstition made it a vehicle of its own magical rites. There was the Bible, the book

of divine oracles; human inquisitiveness turned it into a book from which to read the dark future. The heathen had done this with the poems of Homer and Vergil. Turning over the pages they suddenly stopped at a verse and then tried to find in this verse the answer to their question. The fathers of the early church detested this method as something quite alien to the Christian mind, but as early as the end of the fourth century people came to feel that it was all right if they only used the Bible for the same purpose. In the sixth century even church officials kept to this practice. When a bishop had to be elected they almost always consulted the Psalter first on behalf of the man to be elected. Bible verses written on parchment were attached to easy chairs in order to keep away the evil spirits. . . . A rolled sheet of lead, inscribed with a psalm and a dreadful curse against any robber, has been found on one of the Ægean Islands hidden in the ground of a vineyard. Evidently the psalm was supposed to be one of the most effective spells. Even the Lord's Prayer and other parts of the Gospels have been abused in the same way.

It is a remarkable book which, in the first place, acquires a reputation for transcendent powers sufficient to incite such superstitious veneration, and which, in the second place, is so full of dignity and force that it can withstand the influences which seek everlastingly to degrade it.

II

From this negative demonstration of the vitality of the Bible we may now profitably turn to the positive and constructive influence

it has exerted on civilization. We shall find that it has been a perpetual liberator of mankind from ecclesiastical, political, and social bondage; that what it has achieved among the nations which have experienced the benefits of its influence gives promise that ultimately it will effect all those adjustments by which society is to conform to the highest ideals of justice.

In the earliest Christian centuries the Bible occupied a unique place in the esteem of those who counted themselves the disciples of Jesus, and who in three hundred years brought their religion to a commanding position in the Roman empire. While Christianity was, as now, primarily devotion to Christ, the Bible became the supreme manual by which the life of the Christian was guided, as well as the means by which the principles of the Christian religion were inculcated. In the beginning it consisted of the Old Testament alone, but the ancient collection was so interpreted as to make all its lines converge upon Christ, as he had himself taught his immediate disciples to believe. As the written memorials of Jesus began to circulate a generation after his crucifixion, and the letters of the apostles to churches and individuals gained currency, a New Testament was gradually formed and added to the sacred writings of the Hebrews.

This double collection of books then became the ruling agency in the development of the church.

Persecution was unable to stay the multiplication of manuscripts of the Bible or to quench the devotion of the Christians to their venerable Scriptures. When at length a Christian emperor came to the throne of the Cæsars, he ordered fifty fine copies of the Bible to be prepared for the churches of Constantinople, the recently founded capital of his realm, at his own expense. From that hour copies of the Scriptures increased with great rapidity, and the influence of the Bible in the national life advanced with equal pace. A copy of the sacred volume lay upon the presidential chair at each great church council. It was present in every court room, being used in taking an oath. The Scriptures began to influence legislation from the days of Constantine. Justinian supplemented the old Roman law, which he codified, with laws of his own, in which he sometimes referred to the Bible for his authority. Lawyers in this period made comparisons between the legal enactments of Rome and the law of Moses. The contact of Rome with surrounding nations brought the Bible to the barbarous tribes. Continental Europe was illumined by the Scriptures; and when Augustine entered Britain, it was to

place the Bible before the Anglo-Saxons. Charlemagne regulated his public and private conduct by the Scriptures.

What power the Bible exerted in the affairs of men in those centuries, despite the difficulty of circulating it, may readily be understood when we reflect that, once the Canon of Scripture had received general acceptance, the theory of the equal authority of all its parts became dominant, and the Scriptures were conceived as a reservoir of advices suitable for every condition of life and sufficient for every problem which might present itself; or as an arsenal from which weapons might be drawn to meet the antagonism of every enemy of the truth. This view of the Bible persists in our time, but has no such sovereignty as it maintained then, when the church had not yet asserted itself to be an authority above the Bible—the supreme custodian and interpreter of revelation.

In the mediæval period of European civilization the influence of the Bible upon popular thought and action was first obscured and finally almost extinguished, because its precepts were no longer brought into immediate contact with the common mind. Scarcely anyone but the clergy could read. They did not take the Bible away from the laity so much as it was ignored by the latter. Being depend-

ent on the priests for both the knowledge of its contents and an explanation of their meaning, they were easily ruled by the hierarchy, and those desolate decades of ecclesiastical tyranny which are the shame of Christendom naturally ensued.

After the gloomy night of the middle centuries had passed away, a revival of learning having brought scholars to the study of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, the Bible, which had been so great a power in training the early church, came to be the force which upheaved ecclesiastical traditions and institutions, and created grave alarm among the priestly authorities of the Church. It would be most profitable to survey the reforms which swept over Europe in consequence of the rediscovery of the Bible, but names must stand to us for epochal movements. Peter Waldo and his poor men of Lyons, the Albigenses, Wiclif, Huss, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Erasmus, Zwingli, Melanchthon, Knox, and others—figures which represent the whole stream of influences which culminated in the spiritual and churchly reformation of the sixteenth century—sprang into the arena with the Bible in their hands.

That the church would resist this movement was inevitable. Its hostility extended all the way from ignorant assaults upon the Scrip-

tures themselves to brutal persecutions of those who sought the religious freedom offered to them in the Bible. A French priest said from his pulpit in 1530:

> They have found out a new language, called Greek. We must carefully guard ourselves against that language. It will be the mother of all sorts of heresies. I see in the hands of many people a book in that tongue called the New Testament. It is a book full of brambles, with vipers in them.

But even the fires of Smithfield, the wholesale murders in the Netherlands, the frightful massacres in France, the martyrdoms multiplied in every corner of Europe, could not paralyze the energies which were inspired by the Bible. Religious freedom was procured at an enormous cost. A spiritually decadent church, compelled to adjust herself to new and perilous conditions, instituted reforms within her borders, and a new beginning was made in the religious life of the world, which has been maintained with increasing vigor down to the present time.

It is not too much to affirm that in every land where the Bible has been permitted free access to the people national life has been purified and enriched. It is no mere accident that countries in which the Scriptures have been given a dominant influence are the supreme nations of the world. To go no farther afield

than England—and limitations of space enforce the requirement of restricted illustration—we find an example which is a type of many others. Whether John Wiclif realized that the Bible is by its very nature inevitably an ecclesiastical and political emancipator, when he began his translation of the Scriptures into the English vernacular, one cannot tell. But that is precisely what this "morning star of the Reformation" proved by his magnificent work, as did also those noble successors of his who brought it down to later generations through their skillful rendering of the Bible into popular speech.

That fine historian of the English people, J. H. Green, says of the influence of the Bible in England:

> But far greater than its effect on literature or social phrase was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people at large. Elizabeth might silence or tune the pulpits; but it was impossible for her to silence or tune the great preachers of justice and mercy and truth who spoke from the book which she had again opened for her people. The whole moral effect which is produced nowadays by the religious newspaper, the tract, the essay, the lecture, the missionary report, the sermon, was then produced by the Bible alone. And its effect in this way, however dispassionately we examine it, was simply amazing. The whole temper of the nation was changed. A new conception of life and of man superseded the old. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class. Literature reflected the general tendency of the time; and the dumpy little quartos of controversy and

piety, which still crowd our older libraries, drove before them the classical translations and Italian novelettes of the age of Elizabeth.

It is significant of all, in this respect, that occurred in the civilization of Great Britain, that when in the early days King Alfred collected the laws of his people, he placed the Ten Commandments at the beginning. Blackstone said in his commentaries that the Bible had always been regarded as a part of the common law of England. Queen Victoria told a pagan ambassador, as she handed him a copy of the Bible, "That is the secret of the greatness of England." "All that we call modern civilization," says Froude, "in a sense which deserves the name, is the visible expression of the transforming power of the gospel."

In our own country the story is the same. The influence of the Bible on the public life of the Puritans in New England was commanding. In June, 1639, "all the free planters" of the colony of New Haven "assembled together in a general meeting to consult about settling civil government according to God." After much deliberation and careful thought it was unanimously voted "that the word of God shall be the only rule to be attended unto in ordering the government in this plantation." This resolution was observed for a long time, with such variations from the strict

letter as would occasionally be demanded by erring human nature. The Massachusetts Bay Company were bound by their charter "to act according to the laws of God and for the advancement of his gospel, the laws of this land, and the good of this plantation," and in the laws which the colonies framed for themselves they constantly appealed to the Scriptures. Despite the ridicule which has been heaped upon these worthies and their successors for the austerity of their public and private conduct, and the severity of the regulations they adopted for the guidance of civic affairs, it is known to all students of New England history that the moral and religious trend they imparted to the national life of this country had much to do with the subsequent virility of its people. Our colonial period, as it emerged into the stormy days of the Revolution, was unquestionably corrupted by the malign influences of French infidelity and English deism, but the revival of religion which swept over our territory, and which left neither colleges nor wilderness cabins untouched by its invigorating breath, turned our people back to the Bible and the sanctifying power of the morality and spirituality which it inculcates.

Many of our leaders and publicists through the succeeding years have not hesitated to

declare in unequivocal terms that the perpetuity of our American institutions is dependent upon the practical veneration we give to the Bible. During his last illness Andrew Jackson, pointing to the family Bible, said, "That book, sir, is the rock on which the republic rests." Not less striking is the tribute of Daniel Webster: "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm and bury our glory in profound obscurity." In the Centennial Letter which President Grant addressed to the American Sunday schools he said:

> Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor to your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all progress made in our true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future.

After the battle of Manila and the extraordinary defeat of the Spanish fleet at Santiago, the editor of an influential newspaper in Buenos Aires declared in his columns that the success of the United States in these and other conflicts was due to the fact that it was a Protestant nation and that its people were nourished on the Bible.

It was no sentimental and passing impres-

sion that led Garibaldi to say, "The Bible is the cannon that will make Italy truly free." The rugged democracy of the English people is to be referred to the potent sway of the Bible over their writers and speakers for a thousand years. For it was not Cromwell alone, and the Puritan hosts which surrounded him, who derived from the Bible their inspiration to fight for constitutional liberty; but virtually every leader of the people's causes in all civilized lands, who has left an abiding mark upon succeeding generations, has found his instigation and sustenance in the same source.

The pressure of the Bible upon the social conscience of mankind is but another phase of its influence on the political destinies of nations. Lord Morley declares that Gladstone went no farther for his social doctrines "than the Sermon on the Mount, where so many secret elements of social volcano slumber." He had no need to search elsewhere. It is in the Scriptures that revolutions for the sake of ameliorating human conditions are most prolifically bred. Tyranny has no more explosive book to dread, and wherever its pages are read and its teachings followed despotisms and social iniquities are doomed to destruction. Wendell Phillips said: "The answer to the Shastras is India; the answer to Confucianism is China; the answer to the Koran is Tur-

key; the answer to the Bible is the Christian civilization of Protestant Europe and America." There is not so much as a hint of any social question in the far East until the Bible comes to disturb the hideous caste systems of the Orient. Injustice is secure everywhere till the righteousness of the gospel draws its flaming sword. Oppression and inhumanity are driven out only when the Bible is given its supremacy over the consciences of men.

Think of the barbarities which flourished in England, despite the fact that she was nominally Christian, before the Bible, through the wide distribution afforded it by societies organized for the purpose, had made them impossible. Lawbreakers were under the ban of a penal code which now seems incredibly senseless and cruel. Says William Canton, in a recent volume on The Bible and the Anglo-Saxon People:

> It was death for sacrilege, forgery, letter-stealing; death for horse, sheep, and cattle lifting; death for house-breaking and pocket-picking; death for poaching and destroying young trees; death for blackmailing or appearing disguised on a public way; the law recognized two hundred and twenty-three capital offenses.

"The horrors of Newgate when Elizabeth Fry visited it with the Bible" are thus described:

It was a very caravansary of iniquity and despair. There were men in hundreds, women in hundreds, women with numerous children. Unemployed, uncared for, herded together like brutes, they passed the time in gambling, drinking, fighting, masquerading, singing lewd songs, telling tales of vice and villainy, planning fresh crimes. Among the prisoners there were boys and girls from nine to thirteen years of age, growing up for the gallows—though there was little need to grow, for a child of ten was not too young for the hangman.

How from these frightful abuses public sentiment gradually demanded relief, how, through the labors of such lovers of the Bible as Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce, and their friends, slavery was abolished in the British dominions, how eventually the conditions of manual toil for men, women, and children, which were as intolerable in their way as the lives of prisoners, were made more humane—these are reforms known to all the world, and they were achieved through the energy which the Bible put into the souls of philanthropists.

When Nicholas I was emperor of Russia there were millions of serfs in his domain. His son Alexander expressed profound sorrow for them. When he was asked the reason for his compassion, he replied that he derived his sympathy "from reading the Bible which teaches that we are all brethren." When at length he became Czar he gave the serfs their

freedom, to the astonishment of the world. Abraham Lincoln was one of the most diligent readers of the Bible in modern times. His mind and heart were literally full of the Scriptures. He was ruled by them in thought, word, and deed. His hatred for human slavery was not merely the result of a nature singularly humane, but also of his veneration for a book which taught him the iniquity of regarding any man, however degraded, as rightfully the chattel of another, however strong and wise. It needs but a superficial acquaintance with reforms in the past hundred years to induce one to agree with William Lloyd Garrison, "Take away the Bible from us, and our warfare against intemperance, and impurity, and oppression, and infidelity, and crime is at an end. We have no authority to speak, no courage to act."

CHAPTER V

The Bible as Ethical and Spiritual Literature

Reputations are sometimes ruined by assigning to men motives of which they have never dreamed. Religion may be libeled in the same way. When Ingersoll the agnostic went up and down the United States making flippant people shriek with laughter at his paltry witticisms over what he alleged to be Christianity, he was really pounding a theology that had been dead for at least fifty years, though his auditors were not aware of the deception that was being practiced on them, never having given ten minutes of serious investigation to the problems of religion, or to the development of the greatest of the sciences. The attacks made on the Bible, in so far as they seek to discredit its actual worth, are chiefly and ignorantly directed against a Bible that never had any existence outside the misconceptions of uncritical persons. For a great proportion of this fanciful misinterpretation of the significance and claims of the Bible its own avowed friends are responsible, as has already been explained. A further illustration

of this fatuity will fittingly introduce us to an assessment of the true values of the Bible as literature with a moral and spiritual function.

I

We are told that Alexander the Great placed under his pillow at night a copy of Homer's Iliad and the sword with which he carved his way toward universal empire. Though we may properly regard the Bible as, in a true sense, both intellectual stimulus and militant weapon, yet a superstitious veneration for the physical entity which embodies its sacred literature is absurd and belittling. Some people pack copies of the Bible away in their traveling bags when they begin a journey, as women place sachet packets among their clothing, or as pagans hide talismans and charms on their persons to keep away evil powers. They have seen the Bible kissed by witnesses in court as a solemn pledge of veracity. They know that it is believed to have a sanctity which is supposed to attach to no other book. Though they do not intend to manage their lives by an undeviating fidelity to its precepts which they seldom read, yet they would on no account be at any time without a copy of the Scriptures as a protection against peril and plague.

On a little higher range, but one that is almost as injurious to the character of the Bible, are those persons who consider it the ultimate authority on every subject, no matter how remotely or meaninglessly it may approach such a question. They are determined to press this doctrine to the utmost. The result is that, whenever a clash comes between a biblical writer who was working from the standpoint of the knowledge of his day and a scientific investigator who has all the advantage of modern familiarity with the universe, such misguided individuals are compelled either to stultify themselves by denying the evidence of their senses, or to surrender their faith in the validity of the Scriptures. They are like the Caliph Omar, who, when he had captured Alexandria, and was shown its magnificent library, asked, "What is the good of all these books? They are either in accord with the Koran, or they are contrary to it. If the former, they are superfluous, if the latter they are pernicious. In either case let them be burned." So perished many priceless products of human genius. A like attitude is taken toward all literature, of whatever sort, when compared with the Bible, by those who are convinced that it is the final word on every matter. If there be discovered any supposed wisdom that seems to impair the credit of the

Scriptures in the most obscure corner of the least important book, let it be anathema. Such persons need the admonition of James Russell Lowell: "Theology will find out in good time that there is no atheism at once so stupid and so harmful as the fancying God to be afraid of any knowledge with which he has enabled man to equip himself." It is no less degrading to man's intellect and conscience to assume that literature, however sacred, which contravenes the actual and certified discoveries of research must be made to invalidate those findings in order to hold its primacy as a moral and spiritual force.

Another misconception, which is more plausible, but hardly less injurious, if carried to its logical conclusion, is that of supposing the Bible to be the source rather than the result of religion. The Old Testament did not produce Judaism, and the New Testament did not produce Christianity. The actual process was just the reverse. Religion made both these collections of books; they did not make religion. The Hebrew religion existed before the Hebrew Scriptures, and the Christian religion existed before the Christian Scriptures. If all the New Testaments now in existence were swept off the face of the earth, the Christian religion would still remain, and would doubtless produce another New Testament, as in a

broad sense it is actually doing now in the records of its evangelizing triumphs.

We shall never get the right clue to this wonderful literature until we perceive that the Bible is a book of life, a record of moral and spiritual development, a variegated transcript of human experience, the dominant tone of which is religion. "The Bible," says Joseph S. Auerbach, "rightly understood, is the story of the fashioning of men from feeble beginnings to great issues; the toughening of the fiber of character, and the emancipation, through suffering and humiliation and defeat and captivity and exile, from the bondage of idolatry and littleness to moral triumph and spiritual excellence."

The Bible presents an intelligible exhibit of what happened in the evolution of a religion whose advocates predict that it will one day control the world. They believe that it is the substance of a revelation to men of the ultimate means of redeeming human society. In what has occurred, as the report of it transmitted by the Scriptures shows, there was a continuous manifestation of divine influence. But the supernaturalism which is accredited to the Bible must by no means be permitted to efface the impression of naturalism very apparent in its writings.

These considerations should save us from

being scandalized by those occasional divergences from the highest ethical standards which are met in the Bible. We early find that its morality is not uniform. That is precisely what we ought to expect, if we have received this literature for just what it is, the bodying forth in written form of that slow but steady development of the moral sense of mankind under divine tutelage, and not a ready-made counsel of perfection without a flaw or a blemish. Incalculable harm has been done to the Bible by its professed friends trying to explain every act of "the chosen people" which they ascribed to divine command as necessarily in harmony with the divine will. This is to forget that the persons who wrote were men of like passions with ourselves, and that they were as likely to attempt to prejudice future generations in their favor by laying the responsibility of their unworthy deeds on God as the monarchs of Europe are at this moment claiming divine approval for their unspeakably foolish and wicked war. Whittier's reverent analysis is pertinent:

> But nothing can be good in Him
> That evil is in me.

God's character has not changed in the course of the centuries. He is no holier now than he was three thousand years ago. Nor has he any time fallen from those sublime

heights of excellence described by Jesus. We are, therefore, left to the conviction that when in certain historical portions of the Old Testament, Jehovah is represented as ordering actions which in our day would be under the ban of Christian sentiment, the narrators have spoken without divine warrant. Wholesale murder in the interest of a tribe claiming special divine favor cannot be justified by such a violent attack upon God's character under the plea that his providences are inscrutable.

We are well aware how confidently men of infirm moral sense resort to the Scriptures for the encouragement of their wicked designs. Not only do they seek justification there for their personal ambitions, as Napoleon Bonaparte read the books of Samuel and the Kings to ascertain what warrant they gave for monarchy, but they proceed to buttress every sort of villainy in the same fashion, the meanest crimes of history having been palliated by this method. If we should tarry in the Old Testament, or if we should give the same value to the documents of the Old Testament that we ascribe to the Gospels, preferring the teachings of those who affirm that the divine sanction was given to acts of rapine and plunder to the dual law of love to God and man, so clearly enunciated and illustrated by Jesus, we should surely be lost in uncertain

shadows. But the morality of the Bible is to be measured in all its parts by the ethical teachings of Jesus and his apostles, and by that inner sense of right which, first implanted by our Creator, and then developed into acuteness by Christian culture, has qualified us to make such discriminations as men of old seem not to have had the ability to make. Security for moral judgment may be found by bringing all the ethical precepts of ancient writings up to the test of such noble discourses as the Sermon on the Mount and the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

When we have thus determined to gauge the morality of the Bible by the highest it contains we may unhesitatingly give the Scriptures the primacy among manuals of conduct, and ask with Faraday, "Why will people go astray when they have this blessed book to guide them?" The sufficient answer to our question will be that either they do not read it at all, or that, reading it, they do not properly interpret it. The effects of a reasonable appropriation of biblical literature are such, that even men without much repute for devotion, or whose attitude toward Christianity as a system is one of suspicion, unite with the saints in commending it enthusiastically.

Attention has already been given to the influence which the Bible has exerted upon civili-

zation, and a general description has been presented of its power as a liberator of thought, a quickener of the social conscience, and an adjuster of political rights and duties. It could not have fulfilled these functions without first affecting the individuals who in the aggregate constitute society. Said Lord Bacon, "There never was found in any age of the world either religion or law that did so highly exalt the public good as the Bible." Said Goethe, "The mere ethical teachings of the Bible would alone stamp it as the greatest literary treasure of mankind." Said Thomas Jefferson, "I have always said, and always will say, that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better husbands, and better fathers." Recognized as the foundation of the surest prudential wisdom, without which success in life is impossible, the Bible has sometimes been held to contain the very seeds of destruction for the Christian religion which is inculcated by it. For those who follow the practical advices of the Bible for the conduct of their lifework are fairly certain to attain success, and experience has shown that worldly prosperity has a strong tendency to discourage the simple and sacrificial life which fidelity to the Christian religion requires. But the higher morality which the Bible teaches, and which swings those who

accept it away from the blunder of esteeming worldly success the worthiest object of human effort, effectively counteracts this disintegrating peril. The Bible is the supreme guide for conduct. As Matthew Arnold says:

> As well imagine a man with a sense for sculpture not cultivating it by the help of the remains of Greek art, and a man with a sense for poetry not cultivating it by the help of Homer and Shakespeare, as a man with a sense for conduct not cultivating it by the help of the Bible.

To the same purport are the words of William H. Seward:

> I do not believe human society, including not merely a few persons in any state, but whole masses of men, ever has attained or can ever attain, a high state of intelligence, virtue, security, liberty, or happiness without the Holy Scriptures.

Thomas H. Huxley will not be regarded as a prejudiced witness for the Bible, yet he could say:

> Take the Bible as a whole; make the severest deductions which fair criticism can dictate for shortcomings and positive errors; eliminate, as a sensible lay teacher would do if left to himself, all that it is not desirable for children to occupy themselves with; and there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral beauty and grandeur. And then consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history. . . . By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized, and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills,

like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to efforts to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work.

Unite with this the verdict of John Quincy Adams:

I speak as a man of the world to men of the world; and I say to you—search the Scriptures. The Bible is the book above all others to be read at all ages and in all conditions of human life; and not to be read once or twice through, and then to be laid aside, but to be read in small portions every day. In what light soever we regard the Bible, whether with reference to revelation, to history or to mortality, it is an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue.

Dean Stanley relates an incident which occurred during a visit he paid to Heinrich von Ewald, the German scholar and critic, that deserves repeating. A copy of the New Testament which was lying on a small table chanced to fall to the floor. He stooped down, picked it up, and laid it on the table, saying with deep emotion, "In this little book is contained all the best wisdom of the world." The narrator declares that "it is impossible to forget the noble enthusiasm with which this 'dangerous heretic,' as he was regarded, grasped the small volume" and uttered these words.

It is perhaps a tribute to the universality of the biblical literature that on a building of

the Harvard Law School there should be inscribed this sentence from Exod. 18. 20: "Thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do."

There is no richer storehouse of wisdom than the Bible, and many learned men will warmly indorse the words of Whittier in his poem, "Miriam":

> We search the world for truth; we cull
> The good, the pure, the beautiful
> From graven stone and written scroll,
> From all old flower-fields of the soul;
> And, weary seekers of the best,
> We come back laden from our quest,
> To find that all the sages said
> Is in the book our mothers read.

So convinced was Jeremy Taylor of the preeminence of the Bible as a book for the regulation of life, that he gave this admonition: "Do not hear or read the Scriptures for any other end but to become better in your daily walk, and to be instructed in every good work and increase in the love and service of God." It is not to be supposed that this pious instructor intended by this injunction to put a ban upon the study of the Bible as literature, or the reading of the great book for purposes of intellectual pleasure, though these pursuits would have been esteemed by him of small consequence in comparison with the object he

named. What Godet wrote a friend who was preparing for the ministry is a more discriminating exhortation:

> Keep your two readings of the Bible carefully apart—one for your personal edification and the other for the increase of your knowledge, and never allow the first to be merged in the second. Never let a morning pass without *feeding* on the Bible. The Bible ought to be the *bread of life* for our hearts before it becomes a light for our eyes. I speak from my own experience. Don't be afraid that your *scientific* reading may suffer from this separation. Outward separation is often the very path of inward reunion.

Bengel's suggestion may well be added to these counsels, as a safeguard against the folly of making subordinate matters of disproportionate importance: "Eat in peace the bread of Scripture, without troubling thyself about the particles of sand which may have been mixed up with it by the millstone."

Now these are exemplary advices in that they warn us against artificial measures with the Bible, against false preconceptions and injurious prejudices. The Bible has a message for each of us, from the heart of man to the hearts of men. We must read it untrammeled by any personal prepossessions, to ascertain what it holds of good for us, entirely apart from any theory we may hold respecting its inspiration. "I see that the Bible fits into every fold and crevice of the human heart,"

said Arthur Henry Hallam. "I am a man, and I believe that this is God's book because it is man's book."

II

The beneficial effects of habitually reading the Bible, as disclosed in the character thus developed, can scarcely be described in terms too large. The influence of any great literature on the personal invigoration of life is very considerable. Scipio Africanus, we are told, was made a hero by reading Xenophon's graphic histories. In them he met and conversed with Cyrus. Selim II heightened his military ardor, it is said, by poring over Cæsar's Commentaries. In them he learned the art of war by studying the campaigns of a consummate general. Bourdaloue perused the writings of Paul, Chrysostom, and Cicero every year. They increased his blood-earnestness and moral fearlessness. Illustrations of this sort could be multiplied almost indefinitely from the biographies of forceful men and women. But the Bible, with its vast diversity of writings and its marvelous adaptability to all the needs of humanity, is able to show more wonderful results in the strengthening of character than any other literature whatsoever. It is quite unnecessary to point to particular instances, since it is common

knowledge that the most vigorous nations in the world are those which have been the beneficiaries of Bible culture, and that the firmest heroes of these several countries are men who have inflamed their courage and heightened their aspirations from the teachings of the Scriptures. Anent the fructifying influence of the Bible on national character take the testimony of two of America's foremost men: Says Theodore Roosevelt:

> Every thinking man, when he thinks, realizes that the teachings of the Bible are so interwoven and intertwined with our whole civic and social life, that it would be literally—I do not mean figuratively, but literally—impossible for us to figure to ourselves what that life would be if these teachings were removed.

At the close of a lecture on The Bible and Progress, Woodrow Wilson said:

> I ask of every man and woman in this audience that, from this night on, they will realize that part of the destiny of America lies in their daily perusal of this great book of revelation—that if they would see America free and pure they will make their own spirits free and pure by this baptism of the Holy Scriptures.

No force more frequently depresses the moral vitality of human beings than the sorrows and burdens of life, for which they can give no reasonable account. Aware of this many of the world's noblest writers have sought to pour balm upon troubled spirits, and to hearten them for the conflicts of life

by such words as should seem to make the discipline of suffering more rational, or at least fortify the soul against evils which must be endured, however inexplicable they may be. In this ministry to the vexed and disconsolate the Bible holds the crown of supremacy. Robert Browning has treated the problem of pain and suffering with such intelligence and skill as few men have shown who have undertaken to reconcile their fellows to the ordeal of a troubled life. But in Ezekiel, Proverbs, the Psalms, Jeremiah, and especially Job, we have demonstrations of ability in this regard surpassing everything outside the range of Scripture. "Pascal says that Job and Solomon knew most and spoke best about the misery of man. One was the happiest, and the other the most unhappy of mortals. One knew by experience the vanity of pleasures, as the other knew in the same way the reality of evils." Gladstone said, "On most occasions of very sharp pressure and trial some word of Scripture has come home to me as if borne on angels' wings." With greater particularity William T. Stead, the brilliant editor and publicist, relates his experiences with the great book:

> The first time I felt the influence of the Bible was when I first went to a boarding school. I was unspeakably miserable and forlorn. I was only twelve, and had

never been away from home before. It was then I discovered the consolatory influence of many of the Psalms. Take them all around, the Psalms are probably the best reading in the world when you are hard hit and ready to perish. After I left school, Proverbs influenced me most; and I remember, when I was first offered an editorship, reading all the Proverbs relating to kings as affording the best advice I was likely to get anywhere as to the right discharge of editorial duties. When I was busy with active direct work among the ignorant and poor, the story of Moses' troubles with the Jews in the wilderness was most helpful. Later, when, from 1876 to 1878, no one knew when he went to bed but that by morning Lord Beaconsfield would have plunged the empire into war, the Hebrew prophets formed my Bible. In 1885 it was the story of the evangelists. If I had to single out any one chapter which I am conscious of having influenced me most, I should say the first of Joshua, with its oft-repeated exhortation to be strong and to be very courageous; and if I had to single out any particular verses, it would be those which were taught me when a boy, and which I long afterward saw on the wall of General Gordon's room at Southampton: "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart; lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

After returning from his hazardous journeyings in Tibet, Sir Sven Hedin wrote: "Without a strong and absolute belief in God and in his almighty protection I should not have been able to live in Asia's wildest regions for twelve years. During all my journeys the Bible has always been my best lecture and company."

Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;

> The litanies of nations came
> Like the volcano's tongue of flame
> Up from the burning core below—
> The canticles of love and woe.
> The word unto the Prophets spoken
> Was writ on tablets yet unbroken;
> Still floats upon the morning wind,
> Still whispers to the willing mind;
> One accent of the Holy Ghost
> The heedless world has never lost.

So sings Emerson; and while the last two lines of this quotation from his poem called "The Problem" cannot be taken literally, what goes before truthfully expresses the reason for the Bible's incomparable power to move the souls of the sorrow-stricken and to assuage their griefs. It is man's literature—the product of a bleeding heart—suffused with divine compassion—inspired by the Holy Ghost. Its sublime union of the divine and human is nowhere more impressively exhibited than in the prayers which are found here and there in its pages. Robert Louis Stevenson has produced a book of prayers notable for their simplicity, suitability, and chaste eloquence; and many writers have essayed to put into form for devotional use offerings of praise, thanksgiving, and petition. But the prayers of the Bible transcend them all, as a reading of the supplications of Hannah, David, Solomon, Habakkuk, and others will prove.

George Peabody, when an old man, said to a lad who for some purpose had brought a Bible to him in his office: "My boy, you carry that book easily in your youth, but when you are as old as I am, it must carry you." But if we are not acquainted with the glorious literature of the Bible, it cannot have the opportunity of refreshing and invigorating us when the evils of life oppress and the decrepitude of old age steals upon us.

If we pursue with penetration our inquiries into the reasons for the Bible's unparalleled power over the conscience and spirit of mankind, we shall discover certain fundamental truths of the utmost value in attempting to estimate the full worth of the Scriptures. Among these may be mentioned first of all the Bible's ability to reveal men to themselves. In many pagan countries the people, on making their first acquaintance with the book, are with difficulty persuaded that it is not a modern book, written by shrewd missionaries, with the needs and deficiencies of their heathen audiences in mind, so perfectly does it report their characteristic sinful propensities. The Bible has often been called a mirror, and as a medium of communicating to man a clear sense of his real being it has no equal. We are often urged to read the best fiction as a means of acquiring a desirable knowledge of human

nature. Biography is recommended for the same purpose. The poets are suggested because they delve into the depths of the spirit of man. But no literature lays bare the inmost secrets of the human heart with such merciless fidelity to truth as does the Bible. Thousands have been driven by terror away from its blazing disclosures of humanity's weaknesses and wickedness who ought to have been goaded thereby to penitence and righteous resolution, thus confirming the observation of a man of humble circumstances who, upon reading the Bible attentively for the first time, said to his wife, "If this book is true we are lost," but who, upon pushing his way into farther depths of the book, exclaimed, "But if this book is true we may be saved."

From the rude awakening which many a conscience receives from a hurried glance into this mirror the Bible passes on to a companionship with the persistent reader which amounts to a spiritual monitorship. No intimate friend could more indefatigably and affectionately pursue a wayward comrade with admonitions and encouragements of a personal character than does the Bible attach itself as a private counselor to him who freely reads it. Said Robert Browning, "Sydney Smith laughs somewhere at some Methodist or other whose wont was, on meeting an acquaintance in the

street, to open at once on him with some inquiry after the state of his soul. Sydney knows better now, and sees that one might quite as wisely ask such questions as the price of Illinois stock or condition of glebeland." If there be no such energetic soul to prod us with eternal queries about our spiritual estate, the Bible will supply inquisitorial agencies in abundance. There is no getting away from its scalpel. There is no escaping its radium searchings. The Bible is a man's book because it knows man to the very bottom of his life.

Having revealed a man to himself, the Bible proceeds to teach him a philosophy of life which makes him confident for time and eternity. "We account," said Sir Isaac Newton, "the Scriptures of God to be the most sublime philosophy." It is also the most practical, for it is adapted to every grade of intelligence. The contrast between those who have no authority for life, no guide for conduct, and those who steer their course by this book was skillfully drawn by Cowper in his comparison of the indigent English lace-worker with the supercilious French philosopher Voltaire:

> Yon cottager who weaves at her own door,
> Pillows and bobbins all her little store,
> Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night
> Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light;
> Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
> A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;

And in that treasure reads with sparkling eyes
Her title to a mansion in the skies.
O happy peasant! O unhappy bard!
His the mere tinsel, hers the rich reward.
He, praised perhaps for ages yet to come;
She, never heard of half a mile from home;
He, lost in errors his vain heart prefers,
She safe in the simplicity of hers.

During the coronation ceremonies of the young King Edward VI, three swords were brought to him, as a sign that he was to be ruler over three kingdoms. He remarked that there was still another sword which had been overlooked. When surprise was expressed, the royal lad went on to say: "It is the Bible, which is the Sword of the Spirit, and to be preferred before these swords. That ought in all right to govern us, who use them for the people's safety by God's appointment. Without that sword we are nothing, we can do nothing, we have no power. From that we are what we are this day. From that alone we obtain all power and virtue, grace and salvation, and whatever we have of divine strength." It does not diminish the worth of these words that they may have been suggested to the boy by some older head, since we know how devout an attitude he took toward the Bible through all the years of his brief reign, and since we have many proofs of the truth of those words independently of their authorship. The kings

of the earth, no less than the lowliest of their subjects, can find no lamp for their pathway upon whose guiding beams they can more confidently rely than the Bible.

When one turns to the best that the writers of the Orient and the classic poets and philosophers of Greece and Rome have set forth with reference to the possibilities of a future life, and the nature of those rewards and penalties which the intuitions of humanity have in all ages declared to be inevitable, on the supposition that personality survives the grave, the impression made is one of uncertainty and dissatisfaction. We discover in the Bible alone a definite, undeviating, and reasonable doctrine of the consequences of this life through the projection of mundane experience into the unlimited existence of a future world. "I am a creature of a day," said John Wesley, "passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit, coming from God, and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf; a few moments hence I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity. I want to know one thing—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book. At any price give me the book of God. I have it; here is knowledge enough for me.

Let me be a man of one book. Here then I am far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end—to find the way to heaven."

The Bible not only thus reveals a man to himself, places before him a reliable philosophy of life, and gives him a solid expectation of immortality, but it does all this through the unveiling of a great personality known to history as Jesus of Nazareth and to faith as the Son of God. As spiritual literature the Bible carries its own key. Without it the interpretation of the Bible is a profitless and confusing business. In Jesus the Christ the shadows of this book resolve themselves into a radiant picture of God's age-long process of redeeming mankind from meanness and sin. "Ye search the Scriptures," said Jesus to some who were unfriendly to him, "because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me." It is not too much to say that the supreme function of the Bible is to convey to men a knowledge of God through one sublime Figure, who is "the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance." All history previous to his advent is but the dramatized evolution of the divine idea for human disenthrallment. All prophecy, whether predictive or hortatory,

points unerringly to him. All poetry, romance, fiction, tradition, myth, fable, and philosophy of the ancient people of Jehovah, whether dimly recognized or utterly unknown to their authors, were weaving garlands for his brow. He is the center upon which all this splendid literature converges, and he is the power by which its incalculable wealth of thought is transmuted into living character.

After a fleet of foreign vessels had left the bay of Jeddo, a Japanese gentleman of high standing and influence was walking one day upon the beach. He noticed a little object floating on the water at some distance, and sent one of his attendants into the sea to secure it. They brought to him a small book. He could make nothing out of it. He carried it to some Dutch traders, and they told him it was a copy of the New Testament in English. That was of no use to him. He was told that the book had been translated into Chinese, and that by writing to China he could obtain a copy of that version. When he had finally secured it, he invited in some friends and they read it together. There was much in it that was unintelligible to them, for they had no copy of the Old Testament to introduce them to the meaning of this mysterious volume. They eventually learned that in Nagasaki there was a man whose business it was to ex-

plain the book. They dispatched an interpreter to this man to proffer their questions concerning what they had been reading. The minister answered them, and an interchange of inquiry and reply went on for two or three years. Then the Japanese gentleman notified the missionary that he was coming to see him. His retinue was so great that on arriving it filled the whole of the ground floor of the temple in which the Christian teacher was living. In a private conversation after the public interview the Japanese gentleman expressed a wish to be baptized, and said, "When I read the character of Jesus Christ, I cannot tell you how I was affected. I had never heard or read or thought of or imagined any such personage as that; and I believe in him and I love him. You cannot tell how much I, a mature man, reading that for the first time, was affected by the life and character of Jesus Christ." Thus on the bosom of that broad stream which we call the Bible, and which is fast girdling the globe with its sanctifying waters, the knowledge of God in Christ is being borne to earth's remotest inhabitants. It is in this way the literature of a great people attains its true significance.

It is not strange that in the early Christian centuries men and women suffered martyrdom rather than surrender their ownership of writ-

ings which possessed such inestimable worth. Eusebius, the church historian, relates a touching story of a young Christian officer of the Roman army who was quartered at Cæsarea in Palestine. He was greatly esteemed by his superiors and was in line for early promotion. Out of envy a comrade denounced him to the commander as a Christian. He was summoned before his master, asked if the charge was true, confessed at once, and was urged to abjure his faith. He was given three hours for reflection. He went to a small Christian church and told his story to the aged bishop, who took the Bible in one hand and the soldier's sword in the other, and bade him take his choice. Without delay the soldier grasped the Bible, returned to assert that he would continue to be a Christian, and lost his life for his loyalty to the Scriptures.

No such extreme temptation will, in all probability, ever be offered to men in civilized lands. The Bible is making its conquests everywhere in the earth, and where it triumphs peace, order, and fraternity prevail. But it is to be hoped that the ease and immunity from punishment with which men may now profess their devotion to the Bible and the faith which it teaches will not betray them into the folly of esteeming lightly that which has been bestowed upon them at such high cost, and the

possession of which is the richest blessing of their lives.

A song among Welsh peasants, prepared for them by a clerical poet at a time when the Scriptures in their native tongue were being widely distributed, contains wholesome truth for our times:

> The Little Bible for a crown
> Thou mayest buy in any town—
> The Bible in thy mother's tongue.
> Ere that thou lack
> Sell shirt from back,
> 'Tis trustier than thy father's roof
> To keep thee sure and peril proof.

CHAPTER VI

The Bible as Inspired Literature

It is quite impossible to say anything new about the sublimity of the Bible, but the Bible is always saying something new about itself. Practically all that is most noble in praise of the Scriptures was said during the early centuries of Christianity. But the Scriptures themselves continue to pour forth tides of inspiration, and seem to be inexhaustible as fountains of intellectual and spiritual vitality. "I am convinced," said John Robinson to the Pilgrim Fathers who sailed away from Delft in the Mayflower, "that the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his Holy Word." This is precisely what has occurred in the centuries since these words were uttered. Says Francis Peabody, "As it has happened a thousand times before, so it is likely to happen again, that the gospel, examined afresh, with a new problem in mind, will seem to have been written in large part to meet the needs of the new age." Dean Stanley used to say that the Bible had far more in it than had ever been taken out of it. Vinet declared, "The world

will come to an end when Christianity shall have spoken its last word." At seventy-seven years of age a prominent preacher said, "Much in the Bible seems like news to me." This power of the Scriptures to vitalize the thought of men is of itself a demonstration of its own inherent inspiration.

I

The method in which the Bible writings were inspired is sufficiently indicated by the statement in 2 Pet. 1. 21: "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The prophet was a seer, into whose mind and heart God had poured the rich stream of his own life, thus imparting clear moral judgment and deep spiritual enthusiasm. When the prophet spoke for God he was speaking from God. He was borne along by the Holy Spirit just as modern preachers frequently leave the impression upon their auditors that they are being carried quite beyond themselves by a power which is greater than their native abilities. Luther told Melanchthon that "because the prophets were holy and serious people, therefore God spoke with them in their consciences, which the prophets held as sure and certain revelation."

It was for this reason that the prophets were wont to authenticate their deliverances by the phrase: "Thus saith the Lord."

An examination of the Scriptures will show that it was upon this kind of inspiration that the great messengers of truth built their reliance for the authentication of their utterances. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews states the matter comprehensively and yet concisely when he says: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things" (Heb. 1. 1, 2). God was using a variety of spokesmen through the ages preceding the advent of Jesus, but in the world's Redeemer the office of prophecy culminated. Christ spoke with finality. When Moses was ordained of God to perform the task of deliverance, which he thought too vast for his talents and begged that he might be excused from the impossible work on the ground that he was not an eloquent man, but slow of speech, the Lord said unto him: "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exod. 4. 11, 12). When Jeremiah received his commis-

sion as a prophet unto the nations, he said: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched his mouth, and said to him: Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jer. 1. 6, 9). When Isaiah beheld the sublime vision of the Lord upon a throne, high and lifted up, attended by seraphims, and felt himself disqualified for the prophetic office because he was a man of unclean lips, and dwelt in the midst of a people of unclean lips, a live coal taken from the altar of the temple was laid upon his lips, and he was told that his iniquity had been taken away. Then when he heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" he responded, "Here am I; send me," and God said "Go," and gave him the message he was to declare (Isa. 6). Jesus said to his disciples, in referring to the test which would be made of them before synagogues by their enemies: "When they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark 13. 11). In his wonderful farewell discourse before the disciples on the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus said: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will

send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14. 26). And again: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16. 13). In all these instances, and many others which might be given, God is represented as urging on by his personal pressure the speech which his servants are to deliver. Now this is the process by which the writers of the Old Testament and the New Testament Scriptures fulfilled their mission; and it will be remembered that much which appears in literary form was first given orally.

It is not books, therefore, but men of whom we predicate inspiration. No one fancies, it is to be hoped, that the Spirit of God operates on parchment or paper or leaden types or any other material employed to convey truth to those who can read. Only the wielders of these agencies of communication can be truly inspired. We simply make use of a poetic figure when we speak of inspired pens, pages, poems, books. It is the human mind producing literature that is inspired. In the early part of Genesis a beautiful picture is presented which portrays God as blowing the breath of

life into the nostrils of the inanimate figure he had created, endowing the body with a spirit. Here we have a fine symbol of the fact which is of highest significance in the personality of man. He has received the breath of life from God's inspiration. The energy of the Eternal has been imparted to him. He is a being capable of responding to the mind of the Creator. Nothing but a rational creature, made in the spiritual image of God, can yield to divine inspiration. Still earlier in the Genesis account of creation the Spirit of God is represented as moving upon chaos and producing out of it life in manifold expressions, but there was no conscious, intelligent response to the touch of the infinite thought; God was simply operating creatively upon the abyss. Nor would it be correct to say that God inspires animals of a lower order than man, simply because he may be represented as sustaining their lives by his personal will. They have no spiritual intelligence and are therefore not touched by what we call inspiration.

Inspiration, therefore, is bringing the human mind into responsive contact with the mind of God. Illustrations of this process are multitudinous in number. "What is prayer," asks Emerson, "but a sally of the soul after the unfound infinite?" "No man ever prayed

earnestly without learning much." "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding," we are told in the book of Job (32. 8). "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1. 5). "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Psa. 25. 14). In the book of Exodus we are told that God had called out Bezaleel for work upon the tabernacle and "filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work" (Exod. 35. 30-33). There was a man named Ephraem Syrus whom his comrades dubbed "The harp of the Holy Ghost." Novalis called Spinoza "A God intoxicated man." Paul prayed that certain Christians might be "filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3. 19). In all these examples we have illustrations of varying types of inspiration, though the source and method are identical.

Inspiration as thus described is not limited to the writings of the Bible. It will be remembered that on Mars' Hill Paul quoted from one of the Grecian poets in substantiation of his

teaching that God is not far from any of us, but "in him we live, and move, and have our being." Peter affirmed when his eyes had been opened, after his interview with Cornelius, the centurion, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10. 34, 35). Jesus himself recognized in the Syrophenician woman and the Gentile centurion such faith as he had not found in Israel. Augustine confessed that he was incited toward a nobler life by reading the Hortensius of Cicero. Socrates said, "I am moved by a certain divine and spiritual impulse." Pericles before making one of his famous speeches was accustomed to ask that the gods would preserve him from uttering anything which was not helpful to his subject. Haydn, referring to his oratorio, "The Creation," said, "It was not from me but from above it all came." Wherever a writer is in communion with God he will inevitably speak for God. Nearly every race has its sacred books. No man can impartially examine them without being convinced that "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," has shed his radiance upon some of the pages of this literature. In these writings he will find noble thoughts of God, high moral ideals, sharp consciousness of sin, earnest

solicitude for salvation, anticipations of the future life, prayers and songs which might be used in Christian temples, and parables which will remind him of Jesus. It would be unjust to declare that divine inspiration had nothing to do with these productions. As Lowell has so pertinently said:

Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves or leaves of stone,
Each age, each kindred adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, or joy or moan;
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophet's feet the nations sit.

Hence our question is not whether other literature may have been inspired, but whether the literature of the Bible is so preeminently inspired as to be supreme in this regard. And the general tone of the Scriptures is such that few readers of deep intelligence can avoid the impression that they have a quality transcending that of any other writings. Once when Thackeray had been reading Victor Hugo he said, "He is great and writes like God Almighty." He meant no irreverence by this striking utterance, but he gave expression to the supreme test by which the quality of the Bible writers is to be measured. In so far as they speak like God they are the preeminent teachers of truth. Chief Justice Chase said:

"There came a time in my life when I doubted the divinity of the Scriptures, and I resolved as a lawyer and a judge I would try the book as I would try anything in the court room, taking evidence for and against. It was a long, serious, and profound study: and using the same principles of evidence in this religious matter as I always do in secular matters, I have come to the decision that the Bible is a supernatural book, that it has come from God, and that the only safety for the human race is to follow its teachings."

II

Since inspiration relates to men and not to books, it is apparent that it will be conditioned by certain human limitations, unless we regard the writers as mere automatons, a thing quite incredible. Though these men were moved by the Holy Ghost their individuality was not effaced. As Chrysostom said, "Even though it was Paul, yet he was a man." The inspired writer will follow his intellectual aptitudes not less than the man who is devoid of divine inspiration. Paul was a logician; inspiration did not make him a writer of romances. David was a poet; inspiration did not make him a historian. Bezaleel was a skillful artificer; inspiration did not make him

an orator. Inspiration fills a man with divine energy, but this operates within human outlines just as when the tide sweeps in it fills the bays, inlets, and capes and follows the configuration of the coast. Life in the seed, to use another figure, fulfills the promise of the species, in one case making the gnarled oak and in another the straight palm. We have one Spirit working through a diversity of gifts. The treasure is in earthen vessels, and thus it occurs that the Bible presents a great variety of literature. The Holy Ghost employs the talents which men possess, raising them to the highest point of efficiency, but never imparting new gifts which are foreign to the native constitution of a particular mind.

If inspiration is thus limited by the peculiar qualities of the individual writer, so also it must be modified by intellectual deficiencies. If a writer is not a scientist, inspiration will not make him one. If he is a poor Greek scholar, inspiration will not make him a good one. If he has slight acquaintance with history, or has been misinformed about events, inspiration will not make him an accurate chronicler of human affairs. It is inconsistent for us, therefore, to demand that the literature of the Bible shall be taken as authoritative on matters of lesser import than those which deal with the spiritual life. It is wholly unneces-

sary for us to be disturbed when we are told that the biblical writers show a faulty chronology, imperfect scientific conceptions, or use unreliable statistics. If the Bible is inspired for the purpose of lifting humanity to loftier planes of spiritual thought and to induce the purest form of living, then it is of small concern to what extent its writers may deviate from mere historicity, or fall below the scientific knowledge of our times. When a minister was asked, "How do you reconcile the teachings of the Bible with the latest conclusions of science?" he very properly replied: "What are the latest conclusions of science? I have not seen the morning newspaper." The steady advance in the knowledge of the universe and its energies is recognized by all intelligent persons; and devout people, jealous for the reputation of the Bible, would save themselves much pain and embarrassment if they would frankly concede that the biblical authors were invariably writing from the standpoint of the crude science of their day whenever they made allusions to supposed facts of the physical universe. Nothing could have more thoroughly discredited the authenticity of the Scriptures than their perfect correspondence in all points of human knowledge with the results of subsequent investigations such as are now in the hands of our generation. If a book purporting

to be five hundred years old should disclose an acquaintance with the wonderful discoveries which science has made in our own time, everybody would at once denounce the work as an imposture. If we should demand that inspired writers shall, through the control of divine omniscience, be able to anticipate the conclusions of scientific research, then we should find the Bible wholly inexplicable to us, because our deepest thinkers feel that the riddles of the universe are far from being solved. In one hundred years the world will know vastly more about the universal frame than it is possible for us to conceive by any exercise of the imagination. If the Bible embodied such facts as will come to men's knowledge in the long future it would be an inscrutable book. It may be said with all reverence that one of the charms of the Bible is its complete humanness. It is so perfect as a manual of religion because it is so imperfect in many of those qualities which make a scientific book valuable to students of phenomena. The supposed conflict between science and religion, based upon a thoroughly inadequate interpretation of the Scriptures, is an absurdity when it is closely analyzed. Science can take care of itself and the Bible can take care of itself, and the friends of one need not worry about the welfare of the other. They do not fall into the

same category. They do not seek the same outcome. The fact that the Bible writers cannot be trusted to speak authoritatively upon matters which they never intended to treat definitely does not disqualify them from speaking to the souls of men concerning the deepest interests of human life. A lawyer is not disqualified for pursuing his profession because he has no acquaintance with Assyriology, nor is a physician disqualified for following his healing art because he does not know the Chinese alphabet. A geologist may know vastly more about the structure of the Swiss mountain peaks than does his Alpine guide, but the man who has safely led many parties of tourists over the perils of a mountain ascent is of incalculable value to the most learned scientist who desires to scale the sublime heights of a snow-clad peak. The writers of our Bible are unquestionably ill-informed about many things when judged by the standards of modern knowledge, but they know the human heart as no other producers of literature have known it, and they lift before the soul ideals which were never conceived by the human mind until their inspired writings were delivered to the world.

Since the writers who have given to us this superb library we call the Bible lived in periods of history remote from us, and under

civilizations which were different from ours, and were affected by circumstances and fortunes dissimilar from one another, it is not strange that the ethical and spiritual quality of what they gave varies in value. It would seem to be manifestly unfair to compare the moral standards of men living in the early centuries of civilization with the principles of conduct which Christianity has taught men and which many centuries of Christian history have developed. It is mere justice to demand that Paul shall be tested by more severe measurements than Abraham. To submit the Song of Solomon to the same scrutiny which the Gospel of John bears without injury, and to demand of it the same spiritual excellence which we observe in the fourth Gospel, would be obviously inequitable. The book of Ecclesiastes and the Sermon on the Mount are very far apart, as the unprejudiced critic must admit. To affirm that the books of Chronicles are to be judged by the same canons we apply to the Epistle to the Romans is little short of ridiculous. It is only by an artificial method of interpreting the Bible that it is possible even to think of it as possessing uniform value. The spiritual sense of devout believers is revolted by any such mechanical insistence upon the equal value of all parts of the Bible. Whenever a saint proclaims that

certain portions of it have an exalted influence upon his life, he sits in judgment upon other portions of Scripture and intimates that they are of inferior worth.

III

Hence the theory of strict verbal inspiration is untenable. Perhaps there are not many Christians in our day who hold that the Bible was dictated to its writers and that they were simply instruments employed by God to reproduce with absolute accuracy the words which flowed from his mouth. Yet there lingers among us enough of that tradition to cause serious embarrassment. While the church has not committed itself baldly to any such teaching, there is a widespread feeling that something akin to it is the authoritative position of the orthodox bodies. Great harm has been done to religion by the feeling that if we cannot hold to the inspiration of every word in the Bible, a total surrender of the great volume as the source of religious authority must follow. Either we must take the Bible as perfect in every detail, or we must reject the Bible as unreliable. It is important we should make as clear as possible to our generation that no such alternative exists. Years ago, at Oxford University, Dean Burgon, preaching on

the Bible, declared: "Every book of the Bible, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High, faultless, unerring, supreme." The father of Samuel Taylor Coleridge referred to Hebrew as "The intimate language of the Holy Ghost." On the other hand, Jowett of Balliol College, said that "in a certain sense the Authorized Version was more inspired than the original." If our theory of inspiration is correct, then this startling statement is not the rash thing that some would suppose. It is to be presumed that the translators in 1611, being very devout men, constantly invoked the blessing of God upon their work, and that infinite wisdom was pleased to grant their request, so that upon the inspiration originally given to the Bible writers there was added the inspiration which God gave to the revered translators of the ancient tongues into the English vernacular. Such a notion of the continuance of inspiration as a positive help to the illumination of the Scriptures is entirely hostile to the traditional view. But the dictation theory, which we really derive from the old Hebrew rabbins, if pursued to its logical ends, leads to whimsical absurdities. We are told by an early Jewish legend that God dictated the Pentateuch to Moses, and that the writer pur-

sued his task solemnly and with self-poise until the account of his own death was given, which he described weeping. There is an old tradition that all the books of the Old Testament had been destroyed at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, when the temple at Jerusalem was burned. To repair the loss God dictated these books to Ezra. Nothing could be more mechanical than this, and nothing more likely to encourage the doctrine that all parts of the Old Testament are equally inspired. The Jews of the dispersion had a somewhat similar theory about the inspiration of their Greek Bible. They said that when Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt, gathered at Alexandria, seventy elders of the Jews to make a Greek translation of their law, he put each one of them in a separate cell, in order to avoid any communication between them. Then, after working for seventy days, all at once they shouted "Amen!" from their cells, their task having been accomplished. And when the seventy copies had been compared they were found to agree even in the smallest detail. Preposterous as this story seems to the modern mind, it goes scarcely beyond the position taken by some stanch defenders of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. It is evident that we must seek a better theory of inspiration than this.

What has served to sustain such an untenable doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible is the mistaken idea that Protestantism is built upon such a conception of the Scriptures. When the spiritual authority of Rome was defied in the sixteenth century, and a substitute was required for the ultimate sovereignty of the Pope over the consciences of men, it is supposed that the Bible was taken to be that desired authority, that in fact it became the Pope of Protestantism. Such a view does great injustice to Martin Luther and to many other of the reformers. They did indeed substitute the Word of God for the word of man, but they meant not so much that the Bible in its totality should be regarded as the final authority, but the message of salvation contained in the book, the Bible within the Bible. They bowed in adoration not before certain documents, but before the God revealed in Christ through the gospel of redemption. They went still further and found through the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer the same spirit that inspired the Bible and gave them assurance that it came from God. In later periods it cannot be denied that Protestants not quite satisfied with the position of the early reformers did make the whole Bible as it now stands the literal Word of God in all its parts, as if every syllable had been written

by the finger of God himself. This position did great harm to religion, and we have not fully escaped its baneful influence. It proceeded from the fact that those who were responsible for it could not divest themselves of the feeling that an external authority was indispensable. The logic of the Roman Catholic Church in this respect is well-nigh perfect. These are its positions: The Bible is not inerrant. It must be interpreted, therefore, by illumined authorities, such as Church Councils. These Councils are not, however, always convenient or possible when they are most needed. A Pope, therefore, who is endowed with infallibility, must be utilized. All this has the great merit of simplicity, and it has awakened the jealousy of some Protestants. They insist that in the place of an infallible Pope they shall have an infallible Book. They forget that the purpose of God with respect to the Bible is to reveal himself, not to preserve a faultless literature. Their mental attitude is well described by James Martineau: "Yes; the heavenly essence in the earthern jar, the ethereal perfume in the tainting medium, the everlasting truth in the fragile receptacle —this is just the combination which does not content the weakness and self-distrust of men. They want not the treasure only, but the casket too, to come from the sky, and be of

the crystal of the sky." John Locke said, "He that would take away reason to make room for revelation puts out the light of both." God has dowered man with powers and functions which, when properly safeguarded by spiritual fellowship with him, enable human beings to discriminate, in any writings purporting to be sacred, the mind of God from the mind of man. The normal process of seeking revelations of the Eternal is illustrated in the lines with which Bishop Ken describes a righteous man:

> Three volumes he assiduously perused,
> Which heavenly wisdom and delight infused,
> God's works, his conscience, and the Book inspired.

It is not irreverent to say that some sort of agreement between these media of divine communication ought to be possible in arriving at an authentic revelation of God. Protestantism is in its very essence an emphatic dissent from the proposition that an unassailable and indefeasible authority for religion should be found in the church. By the same token it does not demand perfection of detail in the Bible to such an extent as to exclude the operations of the Holy Spirit on the minds of those who read the Scriptures. It reposes some confidence in the spiritual consciousness of the individual Christian. It holds that one of the

prime necessities for the interpretation of the Bible is not merely a consistent theory of its inspiration, but men to read it who are themselves inspired by the same Energy which produced it. "God reveals himself to the readers of the Scriptures," said Dr. George P. Fisher, "as really as to their writers." "There are inspired readers," said Joseph Parker, "as certainly as there are inspired writers." How can anyone read the New Testament, particularly the words of Jesus, with regard to the Holy Spirit's office in leading men to the truth, without believing that?

We should be saved much trouble if in every inquiry concerning the inspiration of the Bible we were to retain a clear understanding of what the Bible actually is, as distinguished from what it is ignorantly supposed to be. Then we should be in a position to examine intelligently its contents and motives, and ask whether it could be what it is and undertakes to do without being inspired. A recapitulation of certain steps already taken may not be amiss at this point.

The Bible did not produce religion: religion produced the Bible.

The Bible is, therefore, a record of religious evolution or an exposition of religious experience under, as we believe, divine tutelage.

This shifts the question of inspiration from

documents to their authors. Inspiration is given to men, not to books.

These writers of the Bible were under divine inspiration for one end only—the development of spiritual truth, not the teaching of science, nor even the making of a historical record perfect in every detail.

They were still men after they were the recipients of inspiration. Therefore they wrote as men. They lost nothing of their individuality.

They were men of differing degrees of spiritual excellence. Therefore their writings are not of uniform religious value.

The test to be applied to their writings is the correspondence of those writings with the known character of God, specifically as revealed in Jesus the Christ.

The Bible as a whole may be regarded as an infallible guide in morals and religion only by admitting this principle of interpretation, the New Testament supplementing and correcting, where needed, the Old Testament; the Sermon on the Mount carrying forward the Decalogue; the Gospels and Epistles moving on to higher ideals than the Psalms and the prophets express.

It is a great blunder to confuse inspiration with omniscience.

Inspiration is a continuous gift of God,

modern believers in him having this endowment as surely as the men of old, "who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

IV

The interior grounds on which men believe that the Bible is inspired have already been suggested. If we cannot find reasons for confessing our faith in the inspiration of the Scriptures in the quality and contents of the literature itself, surely we cannot be induced to adopt this article of faith on the basis of any mechanical conception of its divine origin. It is because the Bible writers speak to the spiritual sense of mankind with unerring aim that we credit those great documents with divine inspiration. Coleridge has phrased the fact of human experience touching the Bible in well-known words: "In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together: the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; and whatever thus finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit."

In a similar strain Joseph Parker says, "I now *know* that the Bible is inspired. It addresses itself to every aspect and every necessity of my nature. It is my own biog-

raphy. I seem to have read it in some other world. We are old friends; the breathing of eternity is in us both, and we have happened together, to our mutual joy, on this rough shore of Time."

Bishop Boone of the Church of England was being assisted by an intelligent Chinese secretary in translating the New Testament. Working together one day, the secretary arose from his table, walked up and down the room for some time in apparent mental perturbation, and finally exclaimed, "Bishop, this book must be of God, for it tells me of myself." That is the fundamental test of the divine inspiration of the Bible.

There are, of course, other grounds upon which reason may construct arguments for a belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures. For example, there is a certain unity binding all these various documents together in a purpose to lead the minds of men into fellowship with the Spirit of God, and this unity is evidently not the result of collusion between the writers who were in many instances far apart in time from one another, but is the inevitable consequence of their dominance by one great mind. The first sentence in Macaulay's History of England reads: "I purpose to write the History of England from the accession of King James II down to a time which is within

the memory of men still living." To this plan Macaulay made all his work conform, and this undertaking he developed as far as he went with much fidelity. Now in the Bible there is no definite proposal stated at the beginning, because the Scriptures do not constitute one book, but a library of books. Nevertheless, no man reads the Bible through without perceiving that the books are actually strung upon a single thread, the redemption of mankind and the restoration of the race to fellowship with God. This fact greatly impressed the poet Dryden, who wrote:

> Whence but from heaven could men unskilled in arts
> In several ages born, in several parts,
> Weave such agreeing truths, or how, or why
> Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
> Unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,
> Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.

Now it is not merely this unity of purpose which impresses us with the unquestionable inspiration of the Scriptures, but also the theme upon which this literature is concentrated. The characteristic and dominant note is the story of redeeming love, a golden strain which, whatever may be our theories of inspiration, never was touched by the noblest writers of the world until the Bible authors took it up. Indeed, we know from searching our own hearts that no man would have dared

to assume that God, the infinite and absolute, was concerned for the welfare of the least creature in his universe if the Bible had not first, through prophets and priests, intimated it, and finally, through the lips of Jesus Christ, made it a sublime certainty. The bare dream that God would stoop to the lowest human intelligence, to the basest and most brutal individual, to lift him up into fellowship with himself, is so impossible without the aid of divine revelation that it never came to a human brain until the Bible introduced it. Nor could that vast and unmatched conception of Deity retain currency in the world to-day were it not for the fact that this enduring literature which inspires men to preach and to write were still the possession of mankind. If it were possible to remove from the literature of the world the influence of the Bible, and to banish from the recollections of men the teachings of Jesus, there would never spring into the thought of the world the faintest hope that God would actually love sinful men. If there were no other ground for believing in the inspiration of the Scriptures, this would be a compelling reason for accepting the teaching that God gave through these great writers of the Bible his own message to mankind.

If we accept all that the destructive critics

of our day have asserted, for the sake of avoiding controversy; if we admit that the Bible is a compilation of books which are evidently the product, for the most part, of transcendent human genius, but which exhibit all the fallibility which ordinarily characterizes the work of men; the historical sections are unreliable, the chronology is faulty, the statistics are erroneous, the science is puerile, and some of the miracles recorded are preposterous; there is nothing in these writings which cannot be accounted for on natural grounds; though the Bible as a whole is obviously superior to all other religious and philosophical works produced by man, yet its inspiration is only such as moved the pen of Homer, of Plato, of Shakespeare, of the best and clearest minds of the ages—then we are left with the problem of the Bible's unparalleled influence on civilization unsolved, and the power of the Scriptures to regenerate human nature unexplained. What the Bible has done for the world of letters, for the redemption of society, for the salvation of men, has been but sketchily and imperfectly touched upon in these lectures. The record of its magnificent achievements one may read in the open books of history. Our modern civilization could have had no existence without the influence of the Bible. The social fabric of the leading nations of the

world would dissolve if the Bible were removed from its structure. When one thinks of this—and it is a subject fit for the most patient and exhaustive investigation—he is moved to agree with the sentiment eloquently phrased by Dr. Richard S. Storrs:

Surely, unless all experience is a lie, and all argument a dream, but one mind that has ever wrought in the earth was competent to this: to make a book, through so many writers, which the Malay should love as well as we; which Newton should cherish as of all most precious, and Pascal should accept as furnishing in its structure a new proof for Christianity, and which the ragged and unkempt child, picked out of the streets, or drawn from the depths of vilest slums, should find to him the most fascinating of volumes. The theophany of Sinai was more striking than this; but even it was scarcely more vivid in its exhibition of the presence of God.

And now if it were written in intelligible lightnings in yonder sky, "The Bible is from God," and underneath the declaration were stamped, in intervolved thunderbolts, the very signature of Jehovah, it could hardly be more demonstrative than this of his authorship in the Scripture. We meet the mind that built the earth when we open the leaves of this Book of the World.

Were all the seas one chrysolite,
  This earth a golden ball,
And diamonds all the stars of night,
  This book were worth them all.

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